The Barren Fig-tree:

OR,

The Doom and Downfal of the *Fruitless Professor.*

Shewing, That the Day of Grace may be past with him long before his Life is ended.

The Signs also by which such miserable Mortals may be known.

By *JOHN BUNYAN.*

—*who being dead, yet speaketh,* Heb. 11. 4.

To which is added,

His Exhortation to Peace and Unity among all that fear God.

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TO THE READER.

Courteous Reader,

I *Have written to thee now about the* Barren Fig-tree, *or how it will fare with the* Fruitless Professor *that ſtandeth in the* Vineyard *of God.*

Of what Complexion thou art, I cannot certainly divine; but the Parable *tells thee, that the* Cumber-ground *muſt be cut down.*

A Cumber-ground *Profeſſor, is not only a Provocation to* God, *a ſtumbling-Block to the* World, *and a Blemiſh to* Religion; *but a Snare to his own Soul alſo. Though his* Excellency *mount up to the Heavens, and his* Head *reach unto the Clouds; yet he ſhall periſh for ever, like his own Dung; they that have ſeen him ſhall ſay, Where is he?* Job. 20. 6.

Now they count it Pleaſure to riot in the day-time, 2 Pet. 2. 13, 14. *but what will they do when the* Ax *is fetch'd out?*

The Tree whoſe Fruit withereth, is reckoned a Tree without Fruit, a Tree twice *dead, one that muſt be pluck'd up by the Roots,* Jude 12.

O thou Cumber-ground! *God expects Fruit, God will come ſeeking Fruit ſhortly.*

My Exhortation therefore is to Profeſſors, that they look to it, that they take heed.

The Barren Fig-tree *in the* Vineyard, *and the* Bramble *in the* Wood, *are both prepared for the* Fire.

Profeſſion is not a Covert *to hide from the Eye of God; nor will it palliate the revengeful Threatning of his Juſtice, he will command to cut it down ſhortly.*

The Church *and a* Profeſſion *are the beſt of Places for the* Upright, *but the worſt in the World for the* Cumber-ground: *He muſt be caſt, as profane, out of the* Mount of God; *Caſt, I ſay, over the Wall of the* Vineyard, *there to wither; thence to be gathered and burned.* It had been better for them that they had not known the Way of Righteouſneſs, 2 *Pet.* 2. 21. *And yet if they had not, they had been damned; but it is better to go to Hell without, than in, or from under a Profeſſion:* Theſe ſhall receive greater Damnation, *Luke* 20. 47.

If thou be a Profeſſor, *read and tremble: If thou be* Profane, *do ſo likewiſe.* For if the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and Sinners appear? Cumber-ground, *take heed of the* Ax; Barren Fig-tree, *beware of the Fire.*

But I will keep thee no longer out of the Book. Chriſt Jeſus, *the Dreſſer of the* Vineyard, *take care of thee, dig about thee, and dung thee, that thou maiſt bear* Fruit: *That when the Lord of the* Vineyard *cometh with his* Ax *to ſeek for* Fruit, *or pronounce the Sentence of Damnation on the* Barren Fig-tree, *thou may'ſt eſcape that Judgment. The* Cumber-ground *muſt to the* Wood-pile, *and thence to the Fire.*

Farewel.

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jeſus in Sincerity. *Amen.*

J. Bunyan.

The Barren Fig-tree:

OR,

The Doom and Downfal of the Fruitleſs Profeſſor.

Luke 13. 6, 7, 8, 9.

A certain Man had a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard, and he came and ſought Fruit thereon, and found none. Then ſaid he to the Dreſſer of his Vineyard, Behold, theſe three Years I come ſeeking Fruit on this Fig-tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he anſwering, ſaid, Lord let it alone this Year alſo, until I ſhall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear Fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou ſhalt cut it down.

AT the beginning of this Chapter we read, how ſome of the *Jews* came to *Jeſus Chriſt*, to tell him of the cruelty of *Pontius Pilate*, in mingling the Blood of the *Galileans* with their Sacrifices. An Heatheniſh

and prodigious Act: for therein he ſhewed, not only his Malice againſt the Jewiſh Nation, but alſo againſt their Worſhip, and conſequently their God. An Action, I ſay, not only Heatheniſh, but prodigious alſo; for the Lord *Jeſus paraphraſing* upon this Fact of his, teacheth the *Jews*, that without Repentance *they ſhould all Likewiſe periſh*. *Likewiſe*, that is, by the Hand and Rage of the *Roman* Empire: Neither ſhould they be more able to avoid the Stroke, than were thoſe *eighteen upon whom the Tower of* Siloam *fell, and ſlew them*, Luke 19. 42, 43, 44. The fulfilling of which Prophecy, for their hardneſs of Heart, and Impeniteney, was in the days of *Titus* Son of *Veſpaſian*, about forty years after the Death of Chriſt. Then, I ſay, were theſe *Jews*, and their City both, environed round on every ſide, wherein both they and it, to amazement, were miſerably overthrown. God gave them Sword and Famine, Peſtilence and Blood, for their outrage againſt the Son of his Love: So *Wrath came on them to the uttermoſt*, 1 Theſſ. 2. 16.

Now to prevent their old and fooliſh *Salvo*, which they always had in readineſs againſt ſuch *Prophecies* and Denunciations

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of Judgment, the Lord Jeſus preſents them with this *Parable*, in which he *emphatically* ſhews them, that their cry of being the *Temple of the Lord*, and of their being the Children of *Abraham*, &c. and their being the Church of God, would not ſtand them in any ſtead. As who ſhould ſay, It may be you think to help your ſelves againſt this my *Prophecy*, of your utter and unavoidable Overthrow, by the Intereſt which you have in your outward Privileges: *But all theſe will fail you:* For what think you? *A certain Man had a* Fig-tree *planted in his Vineyard, and he came and ſought Fruit thereon, and found none.* This is your Caſe, The *Jewiſh* Land is God's Vineyard, I know it; and I know alſo, that *you are the Fig-trees.* But behold, there wanteth the main thing, which is *Fruit*; for the ſake, and in expectation of which, he ſet this Vineyard with Trees. Now ſeeing the *Fruit* is not found amongſt you; the Fruit, I ſay, for the ſake of which he did at firſt plant this Vineyard; what remains, but that in Juſtice he command to cut you down, *as thoſe that cumber the Ground*, that he may plant himſelf another Vineyard? *Then ſaid he to the Dreſſer of his Vineyard, Behold, theſe* three *Years I come*

seeking Fruit on this Fig-tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbreth it the Ground? This therefore must be your End, altho you are planted in the Garden of God; for the barrenness and unfruitfulness of your Hearts and Lives, you must be cut off, yea, rooted up, and cast out of the Vineyard.

In *Parables* there are *two Things* to be taken notice of, and to be enquired into of them that read.

First, The *Metaphors* made use of.

Secondly, The Doctrine, or *Mysteries* couched under such *Metaphors*.

The *Metaphors* in this *Parable* are; (1.) A certain Man. (2.) A Vineyard. (3.) A Fig-tree, barren or fruitless. (4.) A Dresser. (5.) Three Years. (6.) Digging and Dunging, *&c.*

The *Doctrine* or Mystery, couched under these words, is to shew us, *What is like to become of a fruitless* or *formal Professor*. For,

1. By the *Man* in the *Parable*, (Luke 15. 11.) is meant *God the Father*.

2. By the *Vineyard*, (Isa. 5. 7.) his *Church*.

3. By the *Fig-tree*, a *Professor*.

4. By the Dresser, *the Lord Jesus*.

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5. By the *Fig-tree's* barrenneſs, *the Profeſſor's fruitleſneſs.*

6. By the *three* Years, *the Patience of God that for a time he extendeth to barren Profeſſors.*

7. This calling to the Dreſſer of the Vineyard *to cut it down,* is to ſhew *the Outcries of Juſtice againſt fruitleſs Profeſſors.*

8. The *Dreſſer's* interceding, is to ſhew, *how the Lord Jeſus ſteps in, and takes hold of the Head of his Father's Ax,* to ſtop, or at leaſt to defer preſent execution on a barren *Fig-tree.*

9. The *Dreſſer's* deſire to try to make the *Fig-tree* fruitful, is to ſhew you, *How unwilling he is that ever a barren Fig-tree ſhould yet be barren, and periſh.*

10. His digging about it, and dunging of it, is to ſhew *his willingneſs to apply Goſpel-helps to this barren Profeſſor,* if haply he may be fruitful.

11. The Suppoſition that the *Fig-tree* may yet continue fruitleſs, is to ſhew, that when Chriſt Jeſus hath done all, *There are ſome Profeſſors will abide barren and fruitleſs.*

12. The Determination upon this Suppoſition, at laſt to cut it down, *is a certain*

tain prediction of ſuch Profeſſors unavoidable and eternal Damnation.

But to take this *Parable* into pieces, and to diſcourſe more particularly, tho with all *brevity*, upon all the parts thereof.

A certain Man had a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard.]

The Man, I told you, is to preſent to us God the Father, by which *Similitude* He is often ſet out in the *New Teſtament.*

Obſerve then, That it is no new thing, if you find in God's Church *barren Fig-trees*, fruitleſs Profeſſors; even as here you ſee is a *Tree*, a fruitleſs Tree, a fruitleſs *Fig-tree* in the Vineyard. Fruit is not *ſo eaſily* brought forth, as a Profeſſion is *got into*; 'tis eaſie for a Man to clothe himſelf with a fair ſhew in the Fleſh, to word it, and ſay, Be thou warmed and filled with the beſt. 'Tis no hard thing to do theſe with other things; but to be *fruitful*, to bring forth *fruit to God*, this doth not *every* Tree; no not every *Fig-tree*, that ſtands in the Vineyard of God. Thoſe words alſo, *John* 15. 2. [*Every branch in me that beareth not Fruit, he taketh away.*] aſſert the ſame thing. There are branches in Chriſt, in Chriſt's Body

Body myſtical, (which is his Church, his Vineyard) that bear not Fruit, wherefore the Hand of God is to take them away. *I looked for Grapes, and it brought forth wild Grapes*, Iſa. 5. 4. that is, no Fruit at all that was acceptable with God. Again, *Hoſ.* 10. 1. *Iſrael is an empty Vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himſelf*, none to God; he is without Fruit to God. All theſe, with many more, ſhew us the truth of the Obſervation, and that God's Church may be cumbered with fruitleſs Fig-trees, with barren Profeſſors.

Had a [Fig-tree.]

Although there be in God's Church that be barren and fruitleſs; yet, as I ſaid, *to ſee to*, they are like the reſt of the Trees, even a *Fig-tree:* 'Twas not an *Oak*, nor a *Willow*, nor a *Thorn*, nor a *Bramble*, but a *Fig-tree*. Ezek. 33. 31. *They come before thee as the People cometh.* Iſa. 58. 2, 3, 4. *They delight to know my ways, as a Nation that did Righteouſneſs, and forſook not the Ordinances of their God: they ask of me the Ordinances of Juſtice, they take delight in approaching to God*; and yet but barren, fruitleſs, and unprofitable Profeſſors. *Judas* alſo was one of the *twelve*, a *Diſciple*,

Diſciple, an *Apoſtle*, a *Preacher*, an *Officer*, yea, and *ſuch* an one as none of the *Eleven* miſtruſted, but preferred before themſelves, each one crying out, *Is it I? Is it I?* *Mar.* 14. 19. none of them, as we read of, (*Joh.* 6. 70.) miſtruſting *Judas*, yet he in Chriſt's Eye was the *barren Fig-tree*, a Devil, a fruitleſs Profeſſor. The fooliſh Virgins alſo went forth of the World with the other, had Lamps, and Light, and were awakened with the other; yea, had boldneſs to go forth, when the midnight Cry was made, with the other; and thought that they could have looked Chriſt in the Face, when he ſat upon the Throne of Judgment, with the other; and *yet* but *fooliſh*, but *barren* Fig-trees, but fruitleſs Profeſſors: *Mat.* 7. 22, 23. *Many*, ſaith Chriſt, *will ſay unto me in that day, this and that*, and will alſo talk of many wonderful Works; yet, behold, he finds nothing in them, but the *Fruits* of Unrighteouſneſs: they were altogether barren and fruitleſs Profeſſors.

Had a Fig-tree [planted.]

This word [*planted*] doth alſo reach far; it ſuppoſeth one taken out of its natural Soil, or removed from the place it grew in once; one that ſeemed to be called, awakened;

awakened; and not only ſo, but by ſtrong hand carried *from the World* to the Church; *from Nature*, to Grace; *from Sin*, to Godlineſs. Pſal. 80. 8. *Thou broughteſt a Vine out of* Egypt; *thou didſt caſt out the Heathen, and plant it.* Of ſome of the Branches of this Vine, were there unfruitful Profeſſors.

It muſt be concluded therefore, That this Profeſſor (that remaineth notwithſtanding fruitleſs) is, as to the View and Judgment of the Church, rightly brought in thither; to wit, by Confeſſion of Faith, of Sin, *and a Shew of Repentance* and Regeneration, (thus falſe Brethren creep in unawares.) All theſe things this word *Planted* intimateth; yea, further, that the Church is ſatisfied with them, conſents they ſhould abide in the Garden, and counteth them ſound as the reſt. But before God, in the ſight of God, they are graceleſs Profeſſors, *barren and fruitleſs Fig-trees.*

Therefore it is one thing to be *IN the Church*, or in a Profeſſion; and another to be *OF the Church*; and to belong to that Kingdom, that is prepared for the Saint, that is ſo indeed. Otherwiſe, *being planted, ſhall it proſper, ſhall it not utterly wither, when the Eaſt-wind toucheth it? It ſhall wi-*

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ther in the Furrows where it grew, Ezek. 17. 10.

Had a Fig-tree planted in [his] *Vineyard.*

In [*his*] Vineyard. Hypocrites, with rotten Hearts, are not afraid to come before God in *Sion*. These Words therefore ſuggeſt unto us, a prodigious kind of Boldneſs and hardned Fearleſneſs: For what Preſumption higher, and what Attempt more deſperate, than for a Man that wanteth Grace, and the true Knowledg of God, to crowd himſelf (in that Condition) into the Houſe, or Church of God; or to make profeſſion of, and deſire that the Name of God ſhould be called upon by him?

For the Man that maketh a Profeſſion of the Religion of Jeſus Chriſt, that Man hath, as it were, *put the Name of God upon himſelf*, and is called and reckoned now, (how fruitleſs ſoever before God or Men) the Man that hath to do with God, the Man that God owneth, and will ſtand for. This Man, I ſay, by his Profeſſion ſuggeſteth this to all that know him, to be ſuch a Profeſſor. Men meerly natural, I mean Men that have not got the *deviliſh* Art of Hypocriſy, are afraid to think of doing thus. *And of the reſt durſt no Man join himſelf to them, but*

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the People magnified them, Acts 5. 13. And indeed it diſpleaſeth God; *They have brought*, ſaith he, *Men uncircumciſed into my Sanctuary*. And again, (*Iſai.* 1. 12.) *When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my Courts?* ſaith God. They have therefore learn'd this Boldneſs of none in the viſible World, they only took it of the Devil; for he, and he only (with theſe his Diſciples) attempt to preſent themſelves in the Church before God. *The Tares are the Children of the wicked One:* the *Tares*, that is, the Hypocrites that are Satan's Brood, the Generation of Vipers, that cannot eſcape the Damnation of Hell.

[Had] *a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard.*

He doth not ſay, *He planted a Fig-tree*, but there *was a Fig-tree there*; he *had*, or *found*, a Fig-tree planted in his Vineyard.

The great God will *not* acknowledg the *barren Fig-tree*, or barren Profeſſor, to be *his* Workmanſhip, or a Tree of *his* bringing in; only the Text ſaith, He *had* one there. This is much like that in *Matthew*, Chap. 15. 13. *Every Plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, ſhall be rooted up.* Here again are Plants in his Vineyard, which God will

will not acknowledg to be of his planting: and he ſeems to ſuggeſt, that in his Vineyard are many ſuch; — *Every Plant*, or all thoſe Plants and Profeſſors that are got into the Aſſembly of the Saints, or into the Profeſſion of their Religion, without God and his Grace, *ſhall be rooted up.*

And when the King came in to ſee the Gueſts, he ſaw there a Man that had not on a Wedding-garment; and he ſaid unto him, Friend, how cameſt thou in hither, not having on a Wedding-garment? Matth. 22. 11, 12. Here is one ſo cunning and crafty, that he beguiled all the Gueſts; he got and kept in the Church, even until the *King himſelf came in to ſee the Gueſts.* But his Subtilty got him nothing; it did not blind the Eyes of the King; it did not *pervert the Judgement of the Righteous. Friend, how cameſt thou in hither?* did overtake him at laſt, even a publick Rejection; the King diſcovered him in the face of all there preſent. *How cameſt thou in hither?* My Father did not bring thee hither, I did not bring thee hither, my Spirit did not bring thee hither, thou art not of the Heavenly Father's planting.

John 10. 1. *He that cometh not in by the Door, but climbeth up ſome other way, the ſame is a Thief and a Robber.* This Text al-

is full, and plain to our Purpoſe ;. for *this* man *came not* in by the *Door*, yet got into the *Church*; he got in by climbing; he broke in at the Windows, he got ſomething of the Light and Glory of the Goſpel of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* in his Head; and ſo (hardy Wretch that he was) he preſumed to croud himſelf among the Children. But how is this reſented? What ſaith the King of him? Why this is his Sign, *The ſame is a Thief and a Robber.* See ye here alſo, if all ſuch be owned as the planting of God, that get into his Church, or a Profeſſion of his Name.

Had a Fig-tree, had one without a Wedding-garment; had a Thief in his Garden, at his Wedding, in his Houſe. Theſe climbed up ſome other way. There are *many* ways to get into the Church of God, and Profeſſion of his Name beſide, and without an entring by the Door.

1. There is the Way of *Lying* and *Diſſembling*, and at this *Gap* the *Gibeonites* got in; *Joſh. 9. 3, 4, &c.*

2. There is ſometimes Falſeneſs amongſt *ſome* Paſtors, either for the ſake of carnal Relations, or the like; *at this Hole* Tobiah the Enemy of God got in, *Neh. 13. 4, 5, 6.*

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3. There is ſometimes *Negligence*, and too much Uncircumſpectneſs in the whole Church; thus the Uncircumciſed got in; *Ezek.* 44. 7, 9.

4. Sometimes again, let the Church be *never ſo circumſpect*, yet *theſe* have ſo much help from the Devil, that *they* beguile them all, *and ſo get in.* Theſe are of that ſort of Thieves that *Paul* complains of; *falſe Brethren brought in unawares*, Gal. 2. 3, 4. *Jude* alſo cries out of theſe, *Certain Men crept in unawares*, Jude 4. *Crept in!* What, were they ſo lowly? A voluntary Humility, (*Col.* 2. 22, 23.) a neglecting of the Body, not in any humour. O how ſeemingly ſelf-denying are ſome of theſe creeping things, that yet are to be held (as we ſhall know them) an Abomination to *Iſrael*, *Lev.* 11. 43, 44.

But in a great Houſe, there are not only Veſſels of Gold, and of Silver; but alſo of Wood, and of Earth; and ſome to Honour, and ſome to Diſhonour; 2 Tim. 2. 20. By theſe Words the Apoſtle ſeems to take it for granted, that as there *hath* been, ſo there ſtill *will* be, theſe kind of Fig-trees, *theſe* barren Profeſſors in the Houſe, when all Men have done what they can: *Even as in a great Houſe there are always Veſſels to Diſhonour*,

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as well as those to Honour and Glory; Vessels of *Wood*, and of *Earth*, as well as of *Silver* and *Gold*: So then there must be *wooden* Professors in the Garden of God, there must be *earthly*, *earthen* Professors in his Vineyard: but that methinks is the biting word, *and some to Dishonour*. *That* to the *Romans* is dreadful, (*Rom.* 9. 21, 22.) but *this* seems to go beyond it. *That* speaks but of the Reprobate in general, but *this* of such and such in particular. *That* speaks of their hardning but in the common Way; But *this*, that they must be suffered to creep into the Church; *there* to fit themselves for their Place, their *own* Place, *Acts* 1. 25. the Place prepared for them of *this sort only*. As the Lord Jesus said once of the *Pharisees*, *These shall receive greater Damnation*, Luke 20.47.

Barren Fig-tree, fruitless Professor, hast thou heard all these things? Hast thou considered that this *Fig-tree* is not acknowledged of God to be his, but is denied to be of his planting, and of his bringing unto his Wedding? Dost not thou see that thou art called a *Thief*, and a *Robber*; that hast either *climbed* up to, or *crept* in at another place than the Door? Dost thou not hear, that there will be in God's House, *wooden* and *earthly* Professors, and that no place will

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ſerve to fit thoſe for Hell, but the Houſe *Church*, the Vineyard of God! Barren *Fig tree!* fruitleſs Chriſtian! do not thine Ea tingle?

And [He] *came and ſought Fruit thereo*

When a Man hath got a Profeſſion, an is crouded into the Church and Houſe God; the Queſtion is not *now*, Has he Lif hath he right Principles, *but hath he Fruit He came ſeeking Fruit thereon.* It matte not who brought thee in hither, whethe God or the Devil, or thine own vain-glor ous Heart; *But haſt thou Fruit?* Doſt tho bring forth Fruit unto God? *And, let eve one that nameth the Name of the Lord Jeſ Chriſt, depart from Iniquity*, 2 Tim. 2. 1 He doth not ſay, and let every one that ha Grace, or let thoſe that have the Spirit God; but let *every one* that *nameth* t Name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, depart fro Iniquity.

What do Men meddle with Religion fo Why do they call themſelves by the Na of the Lord Jeſus, if they have not the Gra of God, if they have not the Spirit of Chri *God therefore expecteth Fruit:* What they do in the Vineyard? Let them wo or get them out, the Vineyard muſt ha

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Labourers in it: *Son, go work to day in my Vineyard*, Mat. 21. 28. Wherefore, *want of Grace*, and want of Spirit, will not keep God from ſeeking Fruit: *And He came and ſought Fruit thereon*, Luke 8. 8. *He* requireth that which *He* ſeemeth to have: Every Man in the Vineyard, and Houſe of God, promiſeth himſelf, profeſſeth to others, and would have all Men take it for granted, that an Heavenly Principle is in him: Why then ſhould not God ſeek Fruit?

As for them therefore that will retain the Name of Chriſtians, fearing God, and yet make no Conſcience of bringing forth Fruit to him: He ſaith to ſuch, *Away! As for you, Go ye, ſerve every one his Idols; and hereafter alſo, if ye will not hearken to me*, &c. Ezek. 20. 39. Barren *Fig-tree*, doſt thou hear? God expecteth Fruit, God calls for Fruit; yea, God will ſhortly come *ſeeking* Fruit on this Barren *Fig-tree*. Barren Fig-tree! either bear Fruit, or go out of the Vineyard, (and yet then thy Caſe will be unſpeakably damnable.) Yea, let me add; If thou ſhalt neither bear Fruit, nor depart, God *will take his Name out of thy Mouth*, Jer. 44. 26. He will have Fruit. And I ſay further, If thou wilt do neither, yet God in Juſtice and Righteouſneſs will ſtill come for

Fruit.

Fruit. And it will be in vain for thee to count this *Auſterity*: He will *reap where he hath not ſowed, and gather where he hath not ſtrewed*, Matth. 25. 24, 25, 26. Barren *Fig-tree*, doſt thou hear?

Q. *What, if a Man hath no Grace?*

A. Yes, ſeeing he hath a Profeſſion.

And he came and ſought Fruit [thereon.]

A Church then, and a Profeſſion, are not Places where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themſelves and Sins from God. Some of old thought, that becauſe they could cry, *The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord*, that therefore they were delivered, or had a Diſpenſation to do the Abominations which they committed; as ſome in our days. For, who (ſay they) have a Right to the Creatures if not Chriſtians, if not Profeſſors, if not Church-Members? And from this Concluſion, let go the Reins of their inordinate Affections after Pride, Ambition, Gluttony, *pampering themſelves without fear*, Jude 12. daubing themſelves with the Luſt-provoking Faſhions of the Times; to walk with ſtretched-out Necks, naked Breaſts, frizled Fore-top, wanton Geſtures, in gorgeous Apparel, mix'd with Gold and Pearl, and coſtly Array. I will not

here

here make Inſpection into their Lives, their Carriages at Home, in their Corners, and ſecret Holes: But certainly Perſons thus ſpirited, thus principled and thus inclined, have but empty Boughs, Boughs that want the Fruit that God expects, and that God will come down to ſeek.

Barren Fig-tree, thou art not licenſed by thy Profeſſion, nor by the Lord of the Vineyard, to bear *theſe* Cluſters of *Gomorrah*: neither ſhall the Vineyard, nor thy being *crowded* among the *Trees there*, ſhelter thee from the Sight of the Eye of God. Many make Religion their *Cloak*, and Chriſt their *Stalking-horſe*, and by that Means cover themſelves, and hide their own Wickedneſs from Men: *But God ſeeth their Hearts*, hath his Print upon the Heels of their Feet, and pondereth all their Goings: and at laſt, when their Iniquity is found to be hateful, he will either ſmite them with Hardneſs of Heart, and ſo leave them, or awaken them to bring forth Fruit. Fruit he looks for, ſeeks and expects, *barren Fig-tree!*

But what! come into the Preſence of God to ſin? What, come into the Preſence of God *to hide thy Sin*? Alas Man! the Church is God's Garden, and Chriſt Jeſus is the great Apoſtle and High-Prieſt of our Pro-

 feſſion,

ſeſſion. What, come into the Houſe that is called by my Name! into the Place where mine Honour dwelleth! *Pſal.* 26. 8. where mine Eyes and Heart are continually! 1 *Kings* 9. 3. What, come there to ſin, to hide thy Sin, to cloak thy Sin! His *Plants* are an *Orchard* with *pleaſant Fruit*, Cant. 4. 13, 14, 15. And *every* time he goeth into his Garden, it is to ſee the Fruits of the Valley; and to ſee if the Vine flouriſh, and if the Pomegranates bud.

Yea, ſaith he, *He came ſeeking Fruit on this Fig-tree.* The Church is the Place of God's Delight, where he ever deſires to be; there he is Night and Day. He is there to ſeek for Fruit, to ſeek for Fruit of all and every Tree in the Garden. Wherefore aſſure thy ſelf, O fruitleſs One, that thy Ways muſt needs be open before the Eyes of the Lord. *One black Sheep* is ſoon eſpied, although in company with many; *that* is taken with the firſt caſt of the Eye; its different Colour ſtill betrays it. I ſay, therefore, a Church and a Profeſſion are not Places where the Workers of Iniquity may hide themſelves from God, that ſeeks for Fruit; *My Vineyard*, ſaith God, *which is mine, is before me*, Cant. 8. 12.

And

And he came and ſought Fruit thereon, [and found none.]

Barren Fig-tree, hearken; *The continual non-bearing of Fruit, is a dreadful Sign that thou art to come to a dreadful End,* as the winding up of this *Parable* concludeth.

And found none.] *None* at all, or *none* to God's liking: For when he ſaith, *He came ſeeking Fruit thereon,* he means Fruit *meet for God,* (Heb. 6.) pleaſant Fruit, Fruit good and ſweet.

Alas, it is not any Fruit will ſerve; bad Fruit is counted none. *Every Tree that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewen down, and caſt into the Fire,* Matth. 3. 10.

1. There is a Fruit among Profeſſors that withers, and ſo never comes to be ripe; a Fruit that is *ſmitten* in the *Growth,* and comes not to *Maturity,* and this is reckoned *no Fruit.* This Fruit thoſe Profeſſors bear, that have *many* fair *Beginnings,* or Bloſſoms; that make *many* fair *Offers* of Repentance and Amendment; that begin to pray, to reſolve, and to break off their Sins by Righteouſneſs; but ſtop at thoſe Beginnings, and bring no *Fruit forth to Perfection.* This Man's Fruit is withered, wrinkled, ſmit-

ten Fruit, and is in effect *no Fruit at all.*

2. There is an *haſty* Fruit, ſuch as is the *Corn upon the Houſe-top*, Pſal. 129. or that which ſprings up on the *Dunghil*, that runs up ſuddenly, violently, with *great Stalks*, and big *ſhew*, and yet at laſt proves *empty* of Kernel. This Fruit is to be found in thoſe Profeſſors, that on a ſudden are ſo awakened, ſo convinced, and ſo affected with their Condition, that they ſhake the whole Family, the End-ſhip, the whole Town. *For a while* they cry haſtily, vehemently, dolefully, mournfully; and yet all is but a Pang, an Agony, a Fit, they bring not forth Fruit with Patience. Theſe are called thoſe haſty Fruits, *that ſhall be as a fading Flower*, Iſa. 28. 4.

3. There is a Fruit that is *vile*, and *ill-taſted*, Jer. 24. how long ſoever it be in growing; the Root is dried, and cannot convey a Sufficiency of Sap to the Branches to ripen the Fruit. Theſe are the Fruit of ſuch Profeſſors, whoſe Heart is eſtranged from Communion with the Holy Ghoſt, whoſe Fruit groweth *from themſelves*, from their Parts, Gifts, Strength of Wit, natural or moral Principles. Theſe, notwithſtanding they bring forth Fruit, are called *empty*

Vines,

Vines, ſuch as bring not forth Fruit to God.

Their Root is dried up, they ſhall bear no Fruit; yea, though they bring forth, yet will I ſlay even the beloved Fruit of their Womb, Hoſ. 9. 16.

4. There is a Fruit that is *Wild*; *I looked for Grapes, and it brought forth* Wild *Grapes*, Iſa. 5. 4. I obſerve, That as there are *Trees* and *Herbs* that are *wholly* right, and noble, fit *indeed* for the Vineyard: So there are alſo their *Semblance*, but *wild*; not right, but ignoble. There is the *Grape*, and the *wild Grape*; the *Vine*, and the *wild Vine*; the *Roſe*, and the *canker-Roſe*; *Flowers*, and *wild Flowers*; the *Apple*, and the *wild-Apple*, which we call the *Crab*. Now Fruit from theſe *wild* things, however they may pleaſe the *Children* to play with, yet the *Prudent* and *Grave* count them of little or no value. There are alſo in the World a Generation of Profeſſors, that notwithſtanding their Profeſſion, are wild by Nature; yea, ſuch as were never cut *out*, or *off*, from the *wild Olive-tree*, nor never yet planted into the good *Olive-tree*. Now theſe can bring nothing forth but *wild Olive-berries*, they cannot bring forth Fruit *unto God*. Such are all

thoſe that have lightly taken up a Profeſſion, and crept into the Vineyard without a new Birth, and the bleſſing of Regeneration.

5. There is alſo untimely Fruit; *Even as a Fig-tree caſteth her untimely Figs*, Rev. 6. 13. Fruit out of Seaſon, and ſo no Fruit to God's liking.

There are *two* ſorts of Profeſſors ſubject to bring forth untimely Fruit.

Firſt, They that bring forth [Fruit] *too ſoon.*

Secondly, They that bring forth [Fruit] *too late.*

Firſt, They that bring forth *too ſoon.* They are ſuch as at *preſent* receive the Word with *Joy*; and *anon*, before they have Root downwards, they thruſt forth upwards; but having *not root*, when the *Sun* ariſeth they are *ſmitten*, and miſerably die without Fruit. Theſe Profeſſors are thoſe light and inconſiderate ones, that think nothing but Peace will attend the Goſpel; and ſo anon rejoice at the Tidings, without foreſeeing the Evil: Wherefore when the Evil comes, being unarmed, and ſo not able to ſtand any longer, they die, and are withered, and bring forth no Fruit. *He*

that

that received the Seed into ſtony places, the ſame is he that heareth the Word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himſelf, but dureth for a while: for when Tribulation or Perſecution ariſeth becauſe of the Word, by and by he is offended, Matth. 13. 20, 21. There is in *Iſa.* 28. mention made of ſome, *whoſe glorious Beauty ſhall be a fading Flower,* Iſa. 28. 4. becauſe it is Fruit *before Summer.* Both theſe are untimely Fruit.

Secondly, They alſo bring forth untimely Fruit, that ſtay *till the Seaſon is over.* God will have *his* Fruit in *His* Seaſon; I ſay, he will receive them of ſuch Men as ſhall render them to him in *Their* Seaſons, *Matth.* 21. 41. The miſſing of the *Seaſon* is dangerous, ſtaying till the Door is ſhut is dangerous, *Mat.* 25. 10, 11. Many there be that come not till the Flood of God's Anger is raiſed, and too deep for them to wade thrô: *Surely in the Floods of great Waters, they ſhall not come nigh unto him,* Pſal. 32. 6. Eſau's [*afterward*] is Fearful: *For ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the Bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with tears,* Heb. 12. 16, 17.

So the Children of *Iſrael*, they brought to God the Fruits of Obedience too late; their *Lo, we be here*, (Numb. 14. 40, 41, 42.) came too late; Their, *We will go up*, came too late: The Lord had ſworn before, v. 23, 30. *that they ſhould not poſſeſs the Land.* All theſe are ſuch as bring forth *untimely* Fruit, *Heb.* 12. 17. *Luk.* 13. 25, 26, 27. It is the hard hap of the Reprobate, to do all things too late; to be ſenſible of his want of Grace too late; to be ſorry for Sin too late; to ſeek Repentance too late; to ask for Mercy, and to deſire to go to Glory too late.

1. Thus you ſee that Fruit *ſmitten* in the growth, that *withereth*, and that comes not to maturity, *is no Fruit.*

2. That *haſty* Fruit, ſuch as the *Corn upthe Houſe-top*, Pſal. 129. 6. withereth alſo afore it groweth up, *and is no Fruit.*

3. That the Fruit that is *vile* and *ill-taſted*, *is no Fruit.*

4. That *wild* Fruit, *wild* Grapes, Rev. 6. *are no Fruit.*

5. That *untimely* Fruit, ſuch as comes *too ſoon*, or that comes *too late*; ſuch as come not in *their* Seaſon, *are no Fruit.*

And

And he came and ſought Fruit thereon, and found none.

Nothing will do but Fruit: *Mat.* 21. 34. *He looked for Grapes; when the time of Fruit drew near, he ſent his Servants to the Husbandmen that they might receive the Fruit of it.*

Queſt. But what Fruit doth God expect?

Anſw. Good Fruit. *Every Tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down,* Mat. 7. 19. Now before the Fruit can be good, the Tree muſt be good, for good Fruit makes not a good Tree, *but a good Tree bringeth forth good Fruit: Do Men gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thiſtles?* A Man muſt be good, elſe he can bring forth no good Fruit; he muſt have Righteouſneſs imputed, that he may ſtand good in God's ſight from the curſe of his Law. He muſt have a Principle of Righteouſneſs in his Soul, elſe how ſhould he bring forth good Fruits? and hence it is, that a Chriſtian's Fruits are called, *Gal.* 5. 22, 23. *the fruit of the Spirit*; and *the fruits of Righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt*, Phil. 1. 11. The Fruits of the Spirit, therefore the Spirit muſt be there: the Fruits of

Righteouſneſs, therefore Righteouſneſs muſt *firſt* be there. But to particularize in a few things briefly.

Firſt, God expecteth Fruit that will anſwer, and be worthy of that Repentance thou feigneſt thy ſelf to have. Every one in a Profeſſion, and that hath crouded into the Vineyard, pretendeth to *Repentance*: now of every ſuch Soul God expecteth that the *Fruits* of Repentance be found to attend them; Mat. 3. 8. *Bring forth Fruits therefore meet for Repentance*, or anſwerable to thy profeſſion of the Doctrine of Repentance. *Barren Fig-tree*, ſeeing thou art a Profeſſor, and got into the Vineyard; thou ſtandeſt before the Lord of the Vineyard, as one of the Trees of the Garden: Wherefore He looketh for *Fruit* from *thee*, as from the *reſt* of the *Trees* in the Vineyard; *Fruits*, I ſay, and *ſuch* as may declare thee in Heart and Life, one that hath made ſound Profeſſion of Repentance. By thy Profeſſion thou haſt ſaid, *I am ſenſible of the Evil of Sin*: Now then, live ſuch a Life, *as* declares that thou art ſenſible of the Evil of Sin. By thy Profeſſion thou haſt ſaid, *I am ſorry for my Sin*: Why then, live ſuch a Life as may declare *This Sorrow*. By thy Profeſſion thou haſt ſaid,

I am ashamed of my Sin, Psal. 38. 18. yea, but live such a Life, that Men by that may *see thy shame for sin*, Jer. 31. 19. By thy Profession thou sayest, *I have turned from, left off, and am become an enemy to every appearance of evil*, 1 Thess. 5. 22. Ah! but doth thy Life and Conversation declare thee to be such an one? *Take heed, barren Fig-tree, lest thy Life should give thy Profession the Lie.* I say again, Take heed, for God himself will come for Fruit; *And he sought Fruit thereon.*

You have some Professors, that are only Saints before Men, *when they are abroad*, but are Devils and Vipers at *home*; Saints by Profession, but Devils by Practice; Saints in Word, but Sinners in Heart and Life. These Men may have the Profession, but they want the *Fruits that become Repentance.*

Barren Fig-tree! Can it be imagined that those that *paint* themselves, did ever repent of their *Pride?* or that those that *pursue* this World, did ever repent of their *Covetousness?* or that those that walk with *wanton Eyes*, did ever repent of their *fleshly Lusts?* Where, *barren Fig-tree*, is the Fruit of these Peoples Repentance? Nay, do they not rather declare to the World, *that they*

have

have repented of their Profeſſion? Their Fruits look as if they had. Their *Pride* ſaith, they have repented of their *Humility:* Their *Covetouſneſs* declareth, that they are weary of *depending upon God*; and doth not thy *wanton* Actions declare, that thou *abhorreſt Chaſtity?* Where is thy *Fruit, barren Fig-tree?* Repentance is not only a ſorrow, and a ſhame for, but *a turning from Sin to God*, Heb. 6. it is called *Repentance from dead works.* Haſt thou that Godly Sorrow that worketh *Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of?* 2 Cor. 7. 10, 11. How doſt thou ſhew thy carefulneſs, and clearing of thy ſelf; thy indignation againſt Sin; thy fear of offending; thy vehement deſire to walk with God; thy zeal for his Name, and Glory in the World? and what revenge haſt thou in thy Heart againſt every thought of Diſobedience?

But where is the Fruit of this Repentance? Where is thy Watching, thy Faſting, thy Praying againſt the remainders of Corruption? Where is thy Self-abhorrence; thy bluſhing before God, for the Sin that is yet behind? Where is thy tenderneſs of the Name of God and his Ways? Where is thy Self-denial and Contentment? How doſt thou ſhew before *Men* the truth of thy *turning*

ing to God? Haſt thou renounced the hidden things of diſhoneſty, not walking in craftineſs? 2 Cor. 4. 2. Canſt thou commend thy ſelf *to every Man's Conſcience in the ſight of God?*

And he ſought Fruit thereon.]

Secondly, *God expecteth Fruits that ſhall anſwer that Faith which thou makeſt Profeſſion of.* The Profeſſor that is got into the Vineyard of God, doth feign that he hath *the* Faith, the Faith *moſt holy*, the Faith of *God's Elect*. Ah! But where are thy Fruits, barren Fig-tree? *The Faith of the* Romans *was ſpoken of throughout the whole World*, Rom. 1. 8. *and the* Theſſalonians *Faith grew exceedingly*, 2 Theſſ. 1. 3.

Thou profeſſeſt to *believe* thou haſt a ſhare in *another* World; Haſt thou let go *this*, barren Fig-tree? Thou profeſſeſt thou believeſt in *Chriſt*; is he thy Joy, and the *Life of thy Soul?* Yea, what conformity unto Him, or his Sorrows and Suffering? what reſemblance hath his Crying, and Groaning, and Bleeding, and Dying, wrought in thee? doſt thou bear about in thy body the dying of the Lord Jeſus? *and is alſo the Life of Jeſus made manifeſt in thy mortal Body?* 2 Cor. 4. 10, 11. Barren

Fig-tree,

Fig-tree, *Shew me thy Faith by thy Works. Shew out of a good Converſation thy Works with meekneſs of Wiſdom*, Jam. 2. 18. & 3. 13.

What *Fruit*, barren Fig-tree, what degree of *Heart*-Holineſs? for *Faith purifies the Heart*, Act. 15. 9. What *love* to the Lord Jeſus? *for Faith worketh by Love*, Gal. 5. 6.

Thirdly, God expects Fruits, *according to the Seaſons* of Grace thou art under, according to the *rain that cometh upon thee*. Perhaps thou art planted in a good Soil, by great Waters, that thou mighteſt bring forth Branches, and bear Fruit; that thou mighteſt be a goodly Vine or Fig-tree: Shall he not therefore ſeek for *Fruit*, for *Fruit anſwerable to the Means?* Barren Fig-tree, God expects it, and will find it too, if ever He bleſs thee. *For the Earth which drinks in the rain that comes oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dreſſed, receives bleſſing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto curſing, whoſe end is to be burned*, Heb. 6. 7, 8.

Barren Soul! How many ſhowers of Grace, how many dews from Heaven, how many times have the ſilver Streams of the City

City of God, *ran gliding by thy roots, to cauſe thee to bring forth Fruits?* Theſe Showers and Streams, and the Drops that hang upon thy Boughs, will all be accounted for; and will they not teſtifie againſt thee, that thou oughteſt of right *to be burned?* Hear, and tremble, *O thou barren Profeſſor! Fruits that become thy profeſſion of the Goſpel, the God of Heaven expecteth.* The Goſpel hath in it the Forgiveneſs of Sins, the Kingdom of Heaven, and eternal Life: But what Fruit hath thy Profeſſion of a belief of theſe things put forth in thy Heart and Life? Haſt thou given thy *ſelf* to the Lord; and is all that thou haſt to be ventured for his Name in this World? Doſt thou walk like one that is bought with a price, *even the price of precious Blood?*

Fourthly, The Fruit that God expecteth is ſuch *as is meet for himſelf*, Fruit that may glorify God: God's Trees *are Trees of Righteouſneſs, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified*; Fruit *that taſteth of Heaven, abundance* of *ſuch* Fruit: *For herein*, ſaith Chriſt, *is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much Fruit*, John 15. 8. Fruits of all kinds, *new and old*; the Fruits of the Spirit are *in all Goodneſs, and Righteouſneſs, and Truth. Fruits* before the

the World, *Fruits* before the Saints, *Fruits* before God, *Fruits* before Angels.

O, my Brethren, *What manner of Perſons ought we to be*; who have ſubſcribed to the Lord, and have called our ſelves by the Name of *Iſrael? One ſhall ſay, I am the Lord's*; *and another ſhall call himſelf by the Name of* Jacob; *and another ſhall ſubſcribe with his Hand unto the Lord, and ſirname himſelf by the Name of* Iſrael, *Iſa.* 44. 5. Barren Fig-tree, haſt thou *ſubſcribed*, haſt thou *called* thy ſelf by the Name of *Jacob?* and *ſirnamed* thy ſelf by the Name of *Iſrael?* All this thou pretendeſt to, who art got into the Vineyard, who art placed amongſt the Trees of the Garden of God: God doth therefore look for ſuch Fruit as is worthy of his *Name*, as is meet for *Him*; as the Apoſtle ſaith, *We ſhould walk worthy of God*; that is, ſo as we may ſhew in every place, that the preſence of God is *with* us, his Fear *in* us, and his Majeſty and Authority upon *our Actions*. Fruits *meet* for him, ſuch a dependance upon him, *ſuch* truſt in his Word, *ſuch* ſatisfaction in his Preſence, *ſuch* a truſting of him with all my Concerns, and *ſuch* delight in the enjoyment of him, *that may demonſtrate that his Fear is in my Heart*, that my Soul

is

is wrap'd up in his Things, and that my Body, and Soul, and Eſtate, and all, are in Truth, through his Grace, at his diſpoſe. *Fruits meet for him:* Hearty thanks, and bleſſing God for Jeſus Chriſt, for his good Word, for his Free-Grace, for diſcovery of himſelf in Chriſt to the Soul, ſecret longing after another World. Fruit *meet* for him, Liberality to the poor Saints, to the poor World; a Life, in Word and Deed exemplary; a patient and quiet enduring of all things, till I have done and ſuffered the whole Will of God, which he hath appointed for me. *That on the good ground are they, which in an honeſt and good Heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth Fruit with patience,* Luke 8. 15. This is bringing forth Fruit unto God; *Having our Fruit unto Holineſs, and our End everlaſting Life,* Rom. 7. 4. & 6. 22. & 14. 8.

Fifthly, The Lord expects Fruit *becoming the Vineyard of God.* The Vineyard, ſaith he, *Iſa.* 5. 1. *is a very fruitful Hill*; witneſs the Fruit brought forth in *all Ages*: The moſt barren Trees that ever grew in the Wood of this World, when planted in this Vineyard *by the God of Heaven,* what Fruit to Godward have they brought forth? *Abel* offered

offered to God a *more* excellent Sacrifice, *Heb.* 11. 4. Enoch *walked with God three hundred years*, verſ. 5. *Noah*, by his Life of Faith, *condemned the World, and became Heir of the Righteouſneſs which is by Faith*, verſ. 7. Abraham *left his Country, and went out after God, not knowing whither he went*, verſ. 8. *Moſes* left a Kingdom, *and ran the hazard of the Wrath of the King*, for the love he had to God and Chriſt. What ſhall I ſay of them who had Trials, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection? *Heb.* 11. 35, 36, 37. *They were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder; were tempted, were ſlain with the Sword: They wandred about in Sheep-skins and Goat-skins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented.* *Peter* left his Father, Ship and Nets, *Mat.* 4. 18, 19. *Paul* turned off from the Feet of *Gamaliel*. Men brought their Goods and Poſſeſſions (the price of them) and caſt it down at the Apoſtles Feet, *Acts* 19. 18, 19, 20. and others brought their Books together, and burnt them, *curious Books*, though they were worth *fifty thouſand* pieces of Silver. I could add, how many willingly offered themſelves in all Ages, and their *all*, for the worthy Name of the Lord Jeſus, to be rack'd,

rack'd, ſtarved, hanged, burned, drowned, pulled in pieces, and a thouſand Calamities. Barren Fig-tree, the Vineyard of God hath been a fruitful place, What doſt thou there? what doſt thou bear? God expects Fruit according to, or becoming the Soil of the Vineyard.

Sixthly, The Fruit which God expecteth is ſuch as becometh God's Husbandry and Labour. The Vineyard is *God's Husbandry, or Tillage. I am the Vine*, ſaith Chriſt, *John* 15. 1. *and my Father is the Husbandman.* And again, 1 *Cor.* 3. 9. *Ye are God's Husbandry, ye are God's Building.* The Vineyard, God fences it, God gathereth out the Stones, God builds the Tower and the Wine-preſs in the midſt thereof. Here is Labour, here is Protection, here is removing of Hindrances, here is convenient Purgation, and *all, that there might be Fruit.*

Barren Fig-tree! what Fruit haſt thou? haſt thou Fruit becoming the Care of God, the Protection of God, the Wiſdom of God, the Patience *and Husbandry of God?* It is the Fruit of the Vineyard, that is either the ſhame or the praiſe of the Husbandman. *I went by the Field of the Slothful*, ſaith *Solomon, and by the Vineyard of the Man*

void

void of Underſtanding; and lo, it was grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the face thereof, Prov. 24. 30, 31, 32.

Barren Fig-tree! If Men ſhould make a Judgment of the care, and pains, and labour of God in his Church, by the Fruit that thou bringeſt forth, what might they ſay, Is he not ſlothful, is he not careleſs, is he not without diſcretion! O thy *Thorns*, thy *Nettles*, thy *barren Heart*, and *barren Life*, are a continual provocation to the eyes of his Glory, as likewiſe a diſhonour to the glory of his Grace.

Barren Fig-tree, haſt thou heard all theſe things? I will add yet one more.

And he came and ſought Fruit thereon.]

The Queſtion is not now, What thou thinkeſt of thy ſelf, nor what all the People of God think of thee: but what thou ſhalt be found in that day, when God ſhall ſearch thy boughs for Fruit. When *Sodom* was to be ſearched for righteous Men, God would not, in that matter, truſt his faithful Servant *Abraham*; but ſtill as *Abraham* interceded, God anſwered, *If I find fifty, or forty and five there, I will not deſtroy the City*, Gen. 18. 20, 21, 26, 27. Barren Fig-tree,

tree, what ſayeſt thou? God will come down to ſee, God will make ſearch for Fruit himſelf.

And he came and ſought Fruit thereon, and found [none.] *Then ſaid he to the Dreſſer of the Vineyard, Behold, theſe* three *Years I come ſeeking Fruit on this Fig-tree, and find none; Cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?*

Theſe Words are the effect of God's ſearch into the boughs of a *barren Fig-tree*; He ſought Fruit, and found *none*, *none* to his liking, *none* pleaſant and good. Therefore, *firſt*, he complains of the want thereof to the Dreſſer, calls him to come and ſee, and take notice of the Tree; then ſignifieth his pleaſure, he will have it removed, taken away, cut down from cumbering the Ground.

Obſerv. The *barren Fig-tree* is the Object of God's diſpleaſure, God cannot bear with a fruitleſs Profeſſor.

[*Then*] ſaid he, *&c.*

Then, after this provocation; *then*, after he had ſought and found no Fruit, *then*. This word [then] doth ſhew us a kind of an inward diſquietneſs: as he ſaith alſo in another place, upon a like provocation,

Then

Then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousie, shall smoke against that Man, and all the Curses that are written in this Book shall lie upon him; and the Lord shall blot out his Name from under Heaven, Deut. 29. 18, 19, 20.

Then; It intimateth that he was *now* come to a point, to a resolution what to do with this Fig-tree. *Then said he to the Dresser of this Vineyard*, that is, to Jesus Christ, *Behold*; as much as to say, come hither, here is a Fig-tree in my Vineyard, here is a Professor in my Church, that is barren, that beareth no Fruit.

Observe, However the barren Professor thinks of himself on Earth, the Lord cries out in Heaven against him, *Isa.* 5. 5. *And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my Vineyard; I will take away the hedg thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and I will break down the Wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.*

Behold, these three Years I come seeking Fruit, &c.

Observ. *These three years.* God cries out that his patience is abused, that his forbearance is abused: Behold, these three years I have waited, forborn; these three years I have deser-

deferred mine anger; *Therefore I will ſtretch out my hand againſt thee, and deſtroy thee; I am weary with repenting*, Jer. 15. 6.

Theſe three years. Obſerve, God layeth up *all* the *time*; I ſay, a remembrance of all the time, that a *barren Fig-tree*, or a fruitleſs Profeſſor *miſpendeth in this World.* As he ſaith alſo of *Iſrael* of old, *Forty years long was I grieved with this Generation*, Pſal. 95. 10.

Theſe three years, &c.

Theſe *three* Seaſons; *Obſerv.* God remembers how many *Seaſons* thou haſt miſpent: For theſe *three Years* ſignifie ſo many *Seaſons. And when the time of Fruit drew nigh*, that is, about the Seaſon they begin to be ripe, or that according to the Seaſon might ſo have been. *Barren Fig-tree*, thou haſt had Time, Seaſons, Sermons, Miniſters, Afflictions, Judgments, Mercies, and what not? and *yet haſt not been fruitful*: thou haſt had Awakenings, Reproofs, Threatnings, Comforts, *and yet haſt not been fruitful*: Thou haſt had Patterns, Examples, Citations, Provocations, *and yet haſt not been fruitful.* Well, God hath laid up *thy three years* with himſelf: He remembers *every* Time, *every* Seaſon, *every* Sermon, *every* Miniſter, Affliction, Judgment,

ment, Mercy, awakening Pattern, Example, Citation, Provocation, he remembers *all*: As he ſaid of *Iſrael* of old, *They have tempted me theſe* ten *times, and have not hearkened to my Voice*, Numb. 14. 22. And again, *I remember all their Wickedneſs*, Hoſ. 7. 2.

Theſe three *Years*, &c.

He ſeeks for the Fruit of every Seaſon: He will not that any of his Sermons, Miniſters, Afflictions, Judgments or Mercies ſhould be loſt, or ſtand for inſignificant things; he will have *according to the Benefit beſtowed*, 2 *Chron.* 32. 24, 25. *Ezek.* 14.23. He hath not done without a Cauſe all that he hath done, and therefore he looketh for Fruit: Look to it, *barren Fig-tree.*

I came [ſeeking] *Fruit.*

Obſerv. This word [*ſeeking*] ſignifies *a narrow Search:* for when a Man *ſeeks* for Fruit on a Tree, he goes round it and round it; now looking into this Bough, and then into that; he peeps into the inmoſt Boughs, and the lowermoſt Boughs, if perhaps Fruit may be thereon.

Barren Fig-tree, God will look into *all thy Boughs*, he will be with thee in thy Bed-Fruits, thy Midnight-Fruits, thy Cloſet-Fruits, thy Family-Fruits, thy Converſation-

tion-Fruits, to ſee if there be any among all theſe that are fit for, or worthy of the Name of the God of Heaven. *He ſees what the Children of* Iſrael *do in the dark*, Ezek. 8. 12. *All things are open unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do*, Heb. 4. 12, 13.

Seeking Fruit on [this] *Fig-tree.*

I told you before, that he keeps in remembrance the Times and Seaſons that the barren Profeſſor had wickedly miſpent. Now, foraſmuch as he alſo *pointeth out the Fig-tree, This Fig-tree*; it ſheweth that the barren Profeſſor, above all Profeſſors, is a continual *Odium* in the Eyes of God. *This Fig-tree, this* Man *Coniah*, Jer. 22. 28. *This* People draw nigh to me with their Mouth, but have removed their Hearts far from me. God knows who they are among all the *Thouſands* of *Iſrael*, that are the barren and fruitleſs Profeſſors; his Lot will fall upon the Head of *Achan*, though he be hid among *ſix hundred thouſand* Men. *And he brought his Houſhold, Man by Man*; *and* Achan *the Son of* Carmi, *the Son of* Zabdi, *the Son of* Zerah, *of the Tribe of* Judah, *was taken*, Joſh. 7. 17, 18. *This* is the *Achan*, this is the Fig-tree, this is the barren Profeſſor.

There is a Man hath an *hundred Trees* in his Vineyard, and at the Time of the Season he walketh into his Vineyard to see how the Trees flourish: and as he goes, and views, and pries, and observes how they are hanged with Fruit; behold, he comes to one where he findeth nought but Leaves. Now he makes a stand, looks upon it again and again; he looks also here and there, above and below: and if after all this seeking, *he finds nothing but Leaves thereon*; then he begins to cast in his Mind, how he may know this Tree next Year, what stands next it, or how far 'tis off the Hedg; but if there be nothing there that may be as a Mark to know it by, then he takes his *Hook*, and giveth it a private Mark, (*And the Lord set a Mark upon* Cain, *Gen.* 4.) saying, Go thy ways, fruitless Fig-tree, *Thou hast spent this Season in vain.*

Yet doth he not cut it down, I will try it another Year; may be this was not a *hitting* Season. Therefore he comes again *next* Year to see if now it have Fruit; but as he found it before, so he finds it now, *barren, barren*, every Year *barren*; he looks again, *but finds no Fruit.* Now he begins to have *second* Thoughts: How! neither hit last Year, nor this. Surely the Barrenness is not

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in the Seaſon, ſure the Fault is in the Tree. However I will ſpare it this Year alſo, but will give it a ſecond Mark: And it may be, *he toucheth it with a hot Iron*, becauſe he begins to be angry.

Well, at the third Seaſon he comes again for Fruit, but the third Year is like the firſt and ſecond, *no Fruit yet; it only cumbereth the Ground.* What now muſt be done with this Fig-tree? Why, *The Lord will lop his Boughs with Terror*; yea, the Thickets of thoſe Profeſſors *with Iron. I have waited*, ſaith God, *theſe three Years*; I have miſſed of Fruit *theſe three Years:* It hath been a Cumber-ground *theſe three Years, cut it down.* Precept had been upon Precept, and Line upon Line, one Year after another; for *theſe three Years*, but no Fruit can be ſeen; I find none, fetch out the Ax: I am ſure this is the Fig-tree, I know it from the firſt Year, *Barrenneſs* was its Sign then, *Barrenneſs* is its Sign now, make it fit for the Fire. *Behold, the Ax is laid to the Root of the Trees; every Tree therefore that bringeth not forth good Fruit, is hewen down, and caſt into the Fire*, Matth. 3. 10.

Obſerve, my Brethren, *God's Heart cannot ſtand towards a barren Fig-tree.* You know thus it is with your ſelves: If you

have a Tree in your Orchard, or Vineyard, that doth *only cumber the Ground*, you cannot look upon that Tree with Pleaſure, with Complacency and Delight: No, if you do but go by it, if you do but caſt your Eye upon it; yea, if you do but think of that Tree, you threaten it in your Heart, ſaying, *I will hew thee down ſhortly; I will to the Fire with thee ſhortly.* And it is in vain for any to think of perſwading of you to ſhew Favour to the *barren Fig-tree:* and if they ſhould perſwade, your Anſwer is irreſiſtible, *It yields me no Profit*; it takes up room, and doth no good, a better may grow in its room:

Cut it down.

Thus when the Godly among the *Jews* (*Jer.* 14. 17.) made Prayers, that rebellious *Iſrael* might not be caſt out of the Vineyard, what ſaith the Anſwer of God? Jer. 15. 1. *Though* Moſes *and* Samuel *ſtood before me, yet could not my Mind be towards this People; wherefore caſt them out of my Preſence, and let them go forth.*

What a Reſolution is here? *Moſes* and *Samuel* could do almoſt any thing with God in Prayer. How many times did *Moſes* by Prayer turn away God's Judgments from

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even Pharaoh *himſelf?* Yea, how many times did he by Prayer preſerve *Iſrael*, when in the Wilderneſs, (*Pſal.* 106. 23.) from the Anger and Wrath of God? *Samuel* is reckoned excellent this Way, yea ſo excellent, that when *Iſrael* had done that fearful Thing, as to reject the Lord, and chuſe them another King, (1 *Sam.* 12.) he prayed, and the Lord ſpared, and forgave them. But yet neither *Moſes* nor *Samuel can ſave a barren Fig-tree.* No, though *Moſes* and *Samuel* ſtood before me, that is, pleading, arguing, interceding, ſupplicating, and beſeeching, yet could they not incline mine Heart to this People:

Cut it down.

Ah, but Lord it is a *Fig-tree:* a Fig-tree! if it was a *Thorn*, or a *Bramble*, or a *Thiſtle*, the matter would not be much; but it is a *Fig-tree*, or a Vine: Well, but mark the Anſwer of God, Ezek. 15.2,3. *Son of Man, what is the Vine-tree more than any Tree, or than a Branch that is among the Trees of the Foreſt? Shall Wood be taken thereof to do any Work? or will Men take a Pin thereof, to hang any Veſſel thereon?* If Trees that are ſet, or planted for Fruit, *bring not forth that Fruit*, there is betwixt them and the Trees

of the Foreſt, *no Betterment at all*; unleſs the Betterment lieth in the Trees of the Wood, for they are fit to build withal: but a *Fig-tree*, or a *Vine*, *if they bring not forth Fruit*, yea good Fruit, they are fit for nothing at all, but to be cut down, and prepared for the Fire. And ſo the Prophet goes on, *Behold, it is caſt into the fire for fuel: if it ſerve not for fruit, it will ſerve for fuel; and ſo the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the middle of it is burnt.*

Ay, but theſe Fig-trees and Vines are Church-Members, Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*. So was the Fig-tree mentioned in the Text; but what Anſwer hath God prepared for theſe Objections? Why, Ver. 6, 7. *Thus ſaith the Lord God, As the Vine-tree among the Trees of the Foreſt, which I have given to the fire for fuel; ſo will I give the Inhabitants of* Jeruſalem. *And I will ſet my face againſt them, they ſhall go from one fire, and another fire ſhall devour them.*

Cut it down.

The Woman that delighteth in her Garden, if ſhe have a Slip there, ſuppoſe (if it was fruitful) ſhe would not take five Pounds for it; *Yet if it bear no fruit*, if it wither, and dwindle, and die, and turn cumber-

ground

ground only, *it may not ſtand in her Garden.* Gardens and Vineyards are Places for Fruit, for Fruit according to the Nature of the Plant or Flowers. Suppoſe ſuch a Slip as I told you of before, ſhould be in your Garden, and there die; would you let it abide in your Garden? No, away with it, away with it. The Woman cometh into her Garden towards the Spring, where firſt ſhe gives it a ſlight Caſt with her Eye; then ſhe ſets to gathering out the Weeds, and Nettles, and Stones; takes a Beſom and ſweeps the Walks: this done, ſhe falls to prying into her Herbs and Slips, to ſee if they live, to ſee if they are likely to grow: Now, if ſhe comes to one that is dead, that ſhe is confident will not grow, up ſhe pulls it, and makes to the Heap of Rubbiſh with it, where ſhe deſpiſingly caſts it down, and valueth it no more than a *Nettle*, or a *Weed*, or than the *Duſt* ſhe hath ſwept out of her *Walks*. Yea, if any that ſee her ſhould ſay, Why do you ſo? the Anſwer is ready, 'Tis dead, 'tis dead at root: If I had let it ſtand, 'twould but have cumbered the Ground. *The ſtrange Slips* (and alſo the dead ones) *they muſt be a Heap in the Day of Grief, and of deſperate Sorrow*, Iſa. 17. 10, 11.

Cut it down.

There be *two* manner of Cuttings down:

Firſt; When a Man is caſt out of the Vineyard.

Secondly; When a Man is caſt out of the World.

Firſt, When a Man is caſt out of the Vineyard: And that is done *two* ways.

1. By an immediate Hand of God.

2. By the Churches due Execution of the Laws and Cenſures which Chriſt for that Purpoſe hath left with his Church.

Firſt, God cuts down the barren Fig-tree by an immediate Hand, ſmiting his Roots, blaſting his Branches, and ſo takes him away from among his People. *Every Branch*, ſaith Chriſt, *that beareth not Fruit in me, he* (my Father) *taketh away*, John 15. 2. He taketh him out of the Church, he taketh him away from the Godly. There are two things by which God taketh the *barren* Profeſſor from among the Children of God.

Firſt, *Strong Deluſions.*

Secondly, *Open Profaneneſs.*

Firſt, By ſtrong Deluſions, ſuch as beguile the Soul with damnable Doctrines, that ſwerve from Faith and Godlineſs; Iſa. 66. 3, 4. *They have choſe their own Ways*, ſaith

ſaith God, *and their Soul delighteth in their Abominations; I alſo will chuſe their Deluſions, and will bring their Fears upon them.* I will ſmite them with Blindneſs, and Hardneſs of Heart, and Failing of Eyes, and will alſo ſuffer the Tempter to tempt and effect his helliſh Deſigns upon them; 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 10, 11, 12. *God will ſend them ſtrong Deluſions, that they may believe a Lie; that they all may be damned who believe not the Truth, but had pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs.*

Secondly, Sometimes God takes away a barren Profeſſor by open Profaneneſs. There is one hath taken up a Profeſſion of that worthy Name, *the Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; but this Profeſſion is but a Cloak, he ſecretly practiſeth Wickedneſs: He is a Glutton, a Drunkard, or Covetous or Unclean. Well, ſaith God, I will looſe the Reins of this Profeſſor, I will give him up to *his vile Affections*, I will looſe the Reins of his Luſts before him, he ſhall be entangled with his beaſtly Luſt, he ſhall be overcome of ungodly Company. Thus they that turn aſide to their own crooked Ways; Pſal. 125. 5. *The Lord ſhall lead them forth with the Workers of Iniquity.* This is God's Hand immediately; God is now dealing with this Man himſelf. *Barren Fig-tree*, hearken, Thou art crowded into a

Profeſſion, art got among the Godly, and there art a Scandal to the holy and glorious Goſpel; but withal ſo cunning, that like the Sons of *Zerviah*, thou art too hard for the Church; ſhe knows not how to deal with thee. Well, ſaith God, I will deal with that Man my ſelf; Ezek. 14. 7, 8. *I will anſwer that Man by my ſelf:* he that ſets up his Idols in his Heart, and puts the ſtumbling-Block of his Iniquity before his Face, and yet comes and appears before me; *I will ſet my Face againſt that Man, and will make him a Sign and a Proverb; and I will cut him off from the midſt of my People: and ye ſhall know that I am the Lord.*

But, *Secondly*, God doth ſometimes cut down the *barren Fig-tree* by the Church, by the Churches due Execution of the Laws and Cenſures, which Chriſt for that Purpoſe hath left with his Church. This is the Meaning of that in *Mat.* 18. 1 *Cor.* 5. and that in 1 *Tim.* 1. 20. upon which now I ſhall not enlarge. But which Way ſoever God dealeth with thee, *O thou barren Fig-tree*, whether by himſelf immediately, or by his Church, it amounts to one and the ſame. For if timely Repentance prevent not, *The End of that Soul is Damnation.* They are blaſted, and withered, and gather-

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ed by Men, God's Enemies; and at last being cast into the Fire, *burning must be their End. That which beareth Briars and Thorns, is nigh unto cursing, whose End is to be burned*, Heb. 6. 8.

And again, sometimes by *cut it down*, God means, cast it out of the World: Thus he cut down *Nadab* and *Abihu*, when *he burned them up with Fire from Heaven*, Numb. 16. 31, 32, 33. Thus he *cut down* Corah, Dathan, *and* Abiram, *when he made the Earth to swallow them up*. Thus he *cut down* Saul, 1 Sam. 31. 4. *when he gave him up to fall upon the edg of his own Sword, and died.* Thus he *cut down* Ananias *with* Saphira *his Wife, when he struck them down dead in the midst of the Congregation*, Acts 5. 5, 10. I might here also discourse of *Absalom*, *Ahitophel* and *Judas*, who were *all three hanged:* The *first* by God's revenging Hand, the *other* were given up of God to be their own Executioners. These were barren and unprofitable *Fig-trees*, such as God took no pleasure in, therefore he commanded *to cut them down.* The Psalmist saith, *Psal.* 58. 9. *He shall take them away as with a Whirlwind, both living, and in his Wrath.*

Barren Fig-tree, hearken; God calls for the Ax, his Sword, bring it hither, here is a barren

barren Profeſſor, *Cut him down, why cumbereth he the Ground?*

Why cumbereth it the Ground?

By theſe words the Lord ſuggeſteth Reaſons of his Diſpleaſure againſt the barren *Fig-tree*; *It cumbereth the Ground.* The Holy Ghoſt doth not only take an Argument from its *Barrenneſs*, but becauſe it is a *Cumber-ground*, therefore cut it down; wherefore it muſt needs be a Provocation.

1. Becauſe as much as in him lieth, he diſappointeth the Deſign of God in planting his Vineyard; *I looked that it ſhould bring forth Fruit.*

2. It hath alſo abuſed his Patience, his Long-ſuffering, *his three Years Patience.*

3. It hath alſo abuſed his Labour, his Pains, his Care, and Providence of Protection and Preſervation: for he hedges his Vineyard, and walls it about. *Cumber-ground, all theſe things thou abuſeſt.* He waters his Vineyard, and looks to it Night and Day, but all theſe things thou haſt abuſed.

Further; There are other Reaſons of God's Diſpleaſure: As,

Firſt, A *Cumber-ground* is a very Mock and Reproach to Religion, a Mock and Reproach to the Ways of God, to the People of God,

God, to the Word of God, and to the Name of Religion. It is expected of all hands, that *all the Trees* in the Garden of God ſhould be fruitful; *God* expects Fruit, the *Church* expects Fruit, the *World*, even the *World* conclude that Profeſſors *ſhould be fruitful in good Works*; I ſay, the very *World* expecteth that Profeſſors ſhould be better than themſelves: But, *barren Fig-tree*, thou diſappointeſt all: Nay, haſt thou not learned *the wicked ones* thy Ways? Haſt thou not learned them to be more wicked by thy Example, (but that's by the by:) *Barren Fig-tree*, thou haſt diſappointed others, and *muſt be diſappointed thy ſelf. Cut it down, why cumbereth it the Ground?*

Secondly, The barren Fig-tree *takes up the Room where a better Tree might ſtand*; I ſay, it takes up the Room, it keeps, ſo long as it ſtands where it doth, a fruitful Tree out of that Place, and therefore it muſt be *cut down. Barren Fig-tree*, Doſt thou hear? Becauſe the Jews ſtood fruitleſs in the Vineyard; therefore, ſaid God, *Mat.* 21. 33, 41. *The Kingdom of Heaven ſhall be taken from you, and ſhall be given to a Nation that ſhall render him their Fruits in their Seaſon.* The *Jews* for their Barrenneſs were *cut down* and more fruitful People put in their room.

As *Samuel* also said to barren *Saul*, 1 *Sam.* 15. 28. *The Lord hath rent the Kingdom from thee, and hath given it to thy Neighbour that is better than thou.* The unprofitable Servant *must be cast out*, must be cut down, *Mat.* 25. 27.

Cumber-ground! How many hopeful, inclinable, forward People, hast thou by thy fruitless and unprofitable Life, kept out of the Vineyard of God? for thy sake have the People stumbled at Religion; by thy Life have they been kept from the Love of their own Salvation. Thou hast been also a means of hardening others, and of quenching, and killing weak beginnings. Well *barren Fig-tree! look to thy self*, (thou wilt not go to Heaven thy self, and them that would thou hindereſt;) Thou must not always cumber the Ground, nor always hinder the Salvation of others: Thou shalt be *cut down, and another shall be planted in thy room.*

Thirdly, The *Cumber-ground* is a *Sucker*, he draws away the Heart and Nourishment *from the other Trees.* Were the *Cumber-ground cut down*, the other would be more fruitful; he draws away that fatness of the ground to himself, that would make the other more hearty and fruitful. *One Sin-*

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ner deſtroyeth much good, Eccl. 9. 18.

The *Cumber-ground* is a very *Drone* in the *Hive*, that eats up the *Honey* that ſhould feed the labouring Bee; he is a *Thief* in the *Candle*, that waſteth the *Tallow*, but giveth no *Light*; he is the *unſavory* Salt, that is fit for nought but the Dunghil. Look to it *Barren Fig-tree*.

And he anſwering, ſaid unto him, Lord, let it alone this Year alſo, until I ſhall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear Fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou ſhalt cut it down, ver. 8, 9.

THeſe are the words of the Dreſſer of the Vineyard, who, I told you, is Jeſus Chriſt (for he made interceſſion for the Tranſgreſſors.) And they contain a Petition, preſented to an offended Juſtice, praying that a little more Time and Patience might be exerciſed towards the barren cumber-ground *Fig-tree*.

In this Petition there are *Six* things conſiderable:

Firſt, That Juſtice might be *deferred*,

O that Juſtice might be *deferred*. Lord, let it *alone*, &c. a while longer.

Secondly, Here is *Time* prefixed, as a ſpace to try if more Means *will cure a barren Fig-tree*. *Lord, let it alone this Year alſo.*

Thirdly, The Means to help it, are propounded, *until I ſhall dig about it, and dung it.*

Fourthly, Here is alſo an inſinuation of a Suppoſition, that by thus doing, God's expectation may be anſwered; *And if it bear Fruit, well.*

Fifthly, Here is a Suppoſition that the *barren* Fig-tree may *yet* abide *barren*, when Chriſt hath done *what he will unto it*; *and if it bear Fruit*, &c.

Sixthly, Here is at laſt a *Reſolution*, that if thou continue barren, *hewing Days will come upon thee.* And if it bear Fruit, well; *And if not, then after that thou ſhalt cut it down.*

But to proceed according to my former Method, by way of Expoſition.

Lord, let it alone this Year alſo.

Here is aſtoniſhing Grace indeed, aſtoniſhing Grace! I ſay, that the Lord Jeſus ſhould concern himſelf with a *barren Fig-tree*;

tree; that he ſhould ſtep in to ſtop the blow from a *barren Fig-tree.* True, He ſtopt the blow but for a time; But *why did he ſtop it at all?* Why did not he fetch out the Ax? Why did he not do Execution? Why did not he *cut it down? Barren Fig-tree!* 'tis well for thee that there is a Jeſus at God's right Hand, a Jeſus of that largeneſs of Bowels, *as to have compaſſion for a barren Fig-tree*; elſe Juſtice had never let thee alone to cumber the Ground as thou haſt done. When *Iſrael* alſo had ſinned againſt God, down they had gone: *but that* Moſes *ſtood in the Breach*, Exod. 32. 10. *Let me alone*, ſaid God to him, *that I may conſume them in a moment, and I will make of thee a great Nation. Barren Fig-tree*, doſt thou hear? Thou know-not how oft the hand of Divine Juſtice hath been up to ſtrike, and how many years ſince thou hadſt been *cut down*, had not Jeſus caught hold of his Father's Ax. Let me alone, let me fetch my blow, or *cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?* Wilt thnu not hear yet, *Barren Fig-tree?* Wilt thou provoke ſtill? *Thou haſt wearied Men*, and provoked the Juſtice of God; *And wilt thou weary my God alſo?* Iſa. 7. 13.

Lord, let it alone this Year.]

Lord,

Lord, a little longer, let's not loſe a Soul for want of means; *I will try*, I will ſee if I can make it fruitful, *I will not beg a long Life*, nor that it might ſtill be *barren*, and ſo provoke thee. I beg for the ſake of the Soul, the immortal Soul, Lord ſpare it, *one year only*, *one year longer*, *this year alſo*; if I do any Good to it, it will be *in little time*. Thou ſhalt not be over-wearied with waiting; *one year*, *and then*.

Barren Fig-tree, doſt thou hear what ſtriving there is between the *Vine-dreſſer* and the *Husbandman* for thy Life. *Cut it down*, ſays one; *Lord, ſpare it*, ſaith another: *'Tis a Cumber-ground*, ſaith the Father; one year longer prays the Son, *Let it alone this year alſo*.

Until I ſhall dig about it and dung it.

The Lord Jeſus by theſe words ſuppoſeth *two* things, as Cauſes of the want of Fruit in a *barren Fig-tree*, and *two* things he ſuppoſeth as a Remedy.

The things that are a cauſe of want of Fruit, are,

1. *'Tis Earth bound*; Lord, the Fig-tree is *Earth-bound*.

2. *A want of warmer Means*, *of fatter Means*.

Where-

Wherefore accordingly he propoundeth.

First, *To looſen the Earth, to dig about it.*

Secondly, *And then to ſupply it with Dung; to dig about it, and dung it. Lord, let it alone this year alſo, until I ſhall dig about it.* I doubt it is too much grounbound; *The love of this World, and the deceitfulneſs of Riches,* (Luke 14.) lie too cloſe to the Roots of the Heart of this Profeſſor. The love of Riches, the love of Honours, the love of Pleaſures, are the Thorns that choak the Word; 1 Joh. 2. 15, 16. *for all that is in the World, the Luſts of the Fleſh, the Luſts of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life, are not of the Father, but enmity to God.* How then (where theſe things bind up the Heart) can there be Fruit brought forth to God? *Barren Fig-tree,* ſee how the Lord Jeſus, by theſe very words, ſuggeſteth the cauſe of thy fruitleſneſs of Soul. The things of this World *lie too cloſe to thy Heart*; the Earth with its things have *bound up thy Roots: thou art an Earth-bound Soul, thou are wrapt up in thick Clay. If any Man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him:* How then can he be fruitful in the Vineyard? This kept *Judas*

from

from the Fruit of caring for the poor, *Joh.* 12. 6. This kept *Demas* from the Fruit of *Self-denial*, 2 *Tim.* 4. 10. And this kept *Ananias* and *Saphira* his Wife, from the goodly Fruit of Sincerity and Truth, *Acts* 5. 5, 10. What ſhall I ſay, *Theſe are fooliſh and hurtful Luſts, which drown Men in Deſtruction and Perdition; for the love of Money is the root of all Evil*, 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. How then can good Fruit grow from ſuch a Root, the Root of all Evil? *Which while ſome covet after, they have erred from the Faith, and pierced themſelves through with many Sorrows.* It is an evil Root, nay, it is the Root of all Evil: how then can the Profeſſor that hath ſuch a Root, or a Root wrap'd up in ſuch earthly things, as the Luſts, and Pleaſures, and Vanities of this World, bring forth Fruit to God?

Until I ſhall [dig] *about it.*

Lord, I will looſe his Roots, *I will dig up this Earth*, I will lay his Roots bare; my Hand ſhall be upon him by Sickneſs, by Diſappointments, by croſs Providences; I will dig about him until he ſtands ſhaking and tottering, until he be ready to fall; then, if ever, he will ſeek to take faſter hold.

hold. Thus, I ſay, deals the Lord Jeſus oft-times with the barren Profeſſor; *he diggeth about him*, he ſmiteth *one* blow at his Heart, *another* blow at his Luſts, a *third* at his Pleaſures, a *fourth* at his Comforts, *another* at his Self-conceitedneſs; thus he diggeth about him: This is the way to take bad Earth from his Roots, and to looſen his Roots from the Earth. Barren Fig-tree, ſee here the Care, the Love, the Labour and Way, which the Lord Jeſus, the Dreſſer of the Vineyard, is fain to take with thee, if haply thou mayeſt be made fruitful.

Until I ſhall dig about it, and [dung] *it.*

As the Earth, by binding the Roots too cloſely, may hinder the Tree's being fruitful; ſo the want of better Means may be alſo a cauſe thereof. And this is more than intimated by the Dreſſer of the Vineyard, *until I ſhall dig about it and dung it*; I will ſupply it with a more fruitful Miniſtry, with a warmer Word. I will give them Paſtors *after mine own Heart, I will dung them.* You know *Dung* is a more warm, more fat, more hearty, and ſuccouring Matter, than is commonly the place in which Trees are planted.

I will dig about it, and dung it, I will bring it under an *Heart-awakning* Miniſtry; the Means of Grace *ſhall be fat*, and good. I will alſo viſit it with Heart-awakening, Heart-warming, Heart-encouraging Conſiderations; I will apply warm Dung to *its Roots*; I will ſtrive with him by my Spirit, and give him ſome taſtes of the Heavenly Gift, and the Power of the World to come. I am loth to loſe him for want of digging; *Lord, let it alone this year alſo, until I ſhall dig about it, and dung it.*

And if it bear Fruit, well.]

And if the Fruit of all my Labour makes this Fig-tree fruitful, I ſhall count my Time, my Labour and Means well beſtowed upon it; and thou alſo, *O my God*, ſhalt be therewith much delighted: *For thou art gracious and merciful, and repenteſt thee of the Evil which thou threatneſt to bring upon a People.*

Theſe words therefore inform us, that if a barren Fig-tree, a barren Profeſſor, ſhall now at laſt bring forth to God, it ſhall go well with that Profeſſor, it ſhall go well with that poor Soul. His former Barrenneſs, his former tempting of God, his abuſe of God's Patience and long-ſuffering; his miſ-

miſpending Year after Year, ſhall now be all forgiven him. Yea, God the Father, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt will now paſs by, and forget all, and ſay, *Well done*, at the laſt. When I ſay to the wicked, *O wicked Man, thou ſhalt ſurely die*; if he then do that which is lawful and right, if he walks in the Statutes of Life, without committing Iniquity, he ſhall ſurely live, *he ſhall not die*, Ezek. 18. 21. Barren Fig-tree, *doſt thou hear?* The Ax is laid to thy Roots, the Lord Jeſus prays God to ſpare thee: Hath he been *digging* about thee? Hath he been *dunging* of thee, O barren Fig-tree? now thou art come to the Point; if thou ſhalt now become good, if thou ſhalt after a gracious manner ſuck in the Goſpel-dung, and if thou ſhalt bring forth Fruit unto God, well; but if not, *the Fire is the laſt.* Fruit, or the Fire; Fruit, or the Fire, barren Fig-tree. *If it bear Fruit, well.*

And if not, then after that thou ſhalt cut it down.

And if not, &c. The Lord by this *If*, giveth us to underſtand, that there is a Generation of Profeſſors in the World, that are incurable, that *will not*, that *cannot* repent, nor be profited by the means of Grace:

Grace: A Generation, I ſay, that will retain a Profeſſion, *but will not bring forth fruit:* A Generation that will wear out the Patience of God, Time and Tide, Threatnings and Interceſſions, Judgments and Mercies; *And after all will be unfruitful.*

O the deſperate Wickedneſs that is in thy Heart: Barren Profeſſor, Doſt thou hear? the Lord Jeſus ſtands *yet in doubt about thee!* There is an [*if*] ſtands *yet in the way.* I ſay, the Lord Jeſus ſtands yet in doubt about thee, whether at laſt thou wilt be good; whether he may not labour in vain; whether his digging and dunging will come to more than loſt Labour. *I gave her ſpace to repent, and ſhe repented not,* Rev. 2. 21. I digged about it, I dunged it; I gained Time and ſupplied it with Means; but I laboured herein in vain, and ſpent my Strength for nought and in vain. Doſt thou hear, barren Figtree? There is yet a Queſtion, *Whether 'twill be well with thy Soul at laſt?*

There is nothing more exaſperating to the Mind of a Man, than to find all his Kindneſs and Favour ſlighted: Neither is the Lord Jeſus ſo provoked with any thing, as when Sinners abuſe his Means of Grace:

if it be barren and fruitleſs under my Goſpel; if it turn my Grace into Wantonneſs; if after digging, and dunging, and waiting, it yet remain unfruitful, I will let *thee cut it down.*

Goſpel-means applied, is the *laſt Remedy* for a barren Profeſſor; if the Goſpel, if the Grace of the Goſpel will not do, there can be nothing expected, but *cut it down. Then after that thou ſhalt cut it down.*

O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, *thou that killeſt the Prophets, and ſtoneſt them that are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy Children together, as an Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not? Therefore your Houſes are left unto you deſolate.* Matth. 23. 37, 38. Yet it cannot be, but that this Lord Jeſus, who at firſt did put a ſtop to the execution of his Father's Juſtice, becauſe he deſired to try more Means with the *Fig-rree:* I ſay, it cannot be, but that an Heart ſo full of Compaſſion, *as his is*, ſhould be touched, to behold this Profeſſor muſt *now* be cut down; *Luk.* 19. 41, 42. *And when he was come near, he beheld the City, and wept over it, ſaying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy Peace; but now they are hid from thine Eyes.*

After that, thou ſhalt cut it down.]

When Chriſt *giveth thee over*, there is *no* Interceſſor, *no* Mediator, *no* more Sacrifice for Sin: all is gone but *Judgment*, but the *Ax*, but *a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which ſhall devour the Adverſaries*, Heb. 10. 26, 27, 28.

Barren Fig-tree, take heed that thou comeſt not to theſe *laſt words*, for theſe words are a *give-up*, a caſt-up, a caſt-up of a Caſt-away; *After that thou ſhalt cut it down.* They are as much as if Chriſt had ſaid, Father, I begg'd for *more time* for this barren Profeſſor; I begged until I *ſhould dig about it, and dung it:* But now, Father, the *time is out*, the Year is ended, *the Summer is ended*, and no good done. I have alſo tried with my *Means*, with the *Goſpel*; I have digged about it, I have laid alſo the *fat* and *hearty* dung of the Goſpel to it; *but all comes to nothing.* Father, I deliver up this Profeſſor to thee again, I have *done*, I have *done* all, I have *done praying*, and endeavouring; *I will hold the head of thine Ax no longer:* Take him into the Hands of Juſtice, do Juſtice, do the Law, *I will never beg for him more. After that thou ſhalt cut*

it

it down, Wo unto them when I depart from them, Hoſ. 9. 12. Now is this Profeſſor left *naked* indeed, *naked* to God, *naked* to Satan, to Sin, to the Law, to Death, to Hell, *naked* to Judgment, and to the Gripes of a *guilty* Conſcience, and to the torment of that *Worm* that never dies, and to that *Fire* that never ſhall be quenched: *Heb.* 12. 25. *See that ye refuſe not him that ſpeaketh; for if they eſcaped not, who refuſed him that ſpake on Earth, much more ſhall not we eſcape, if we turn away from him that ſpeaketh from Heaven.* From this brief Paſs through this *Parable*, you have theſe *two* general Obſervations.

Firſt, That even then when the Juſtice of God cries out, *I cannot endure to wait on this barren Profeſſor any longer*; then Jeſus Chriſt intercedes for a *little more* Patience, and a *little more* ſtriving with this Profeſſor, if poſſible he may make him a fruitful Profeſſor: *Lord, let it alone this year alſo, until I ſhall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear Fruit, well,* &c.

Secondly, There are ſome Profeſſors whoſe Day of Grace will end with *Cut it down*, with Judgment; when Chriſt by his Means hath been uſed for their Salvation.

The *Firſt* of theſe *Obſervations* I ſhall

paſs, and not meddle at all therewith; But ſhall briefly ſpeak to the *Second*, to wit,

That there are ſome Profeſſors, whoſe Day of Grace will end with Cut it down, *with Judgment, when Chriſt by his Means hath been uſed for their Salvation.*

This the Apoſtle ſheweth in that *third* Chapter of his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*; where he tells us that the People of the *Jews*, after a *forty years Patience*, and endeavour to do 'em good by the Means appointed for that purpoſe, their End was to be *cut down*, or excluded the Land of Promiſe for their final Incredulity; *So we ſee they could not enter in, becauſe of Unbelief.* Wherefore ſaith he, *I was grieved with that Generation, and ſaid, they do always err in their Hearts, and they have not known my Ways: So I ſware in my Wrath, they ſhall not enter into my Reſt.* As who ſhould ſay, I would they ſhould have entred in, and for that purpoſe I brought them out of *Egypt*, led them through the Sea, and taught them in the Wilderneſs; but they did not anſwer my Work nor Deſigns in that matter: wherefore, they ſhall not, I ſware they ſhall not; *I ſwore in my Wrath they ſhould not enter into my Reſt:* Here is cutting down with Judgment. So again, *Chap.* 4. he ſaith,

ſaith, *As I have ſworn in my Wrath*, if *they ſhall enter into my Reſt*, *although the Works were finiſhed from the Foundation of the World*, Heb. 4. 2, 3, 4. This word [*if*] is the ſame with [*they ſhall not*] in the Chapter before. And where he ſaith, *Although the Works were finiſhed from the Foundation of the World*; he giveth us to underſtand, that what preparations ſoever are made for the Salvation of Sinners, and of how long continuance ſoever they are, yet the God-tempting, God-provoking, and fruitleſs Profeſſor is like to go without a ſhare therein; *although the Works were finiſh'd from the Foundation of the World.* Jude 5, 6. *I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having ſaved the People out of the Land of* Egypt, *afterwards deſtroyed them that believed not. And the Angels that kept not their firſt Eſtate, but left their own Habitation, he hath reſerved in everlaſting Chains under Darkneſs, unto the Judgment of the great Day.* Here is an Inſtance to purpoſe, an Inſtance of Men and Angels: Men ſaved out of the Land of *Egypt*, and in their Journey towards *Canaan*, the Type of Heaven, *cut down*; Angels created and placed in the Heavens in great

State and Principality: yet both these, because unfruitful to God in their places, were *cut down*; the Men destroyed by God, (for so saith the Text) and the Angels reserved in everlasting Chains under Darkness, *to the Judgment of the great Day.*

Now, in my handling of this Point, I shall discourse of the *cutting down*, or the Judgment here denounced, as it respecteth the doing of it by God's Hand immediately, and that too, with respect to his *casting them out of the World*; and not as it respecteth an Act of the Church, *&c.* And as to this cutting down, or Judgment, it must be concluded, that it *cannot be before the Day of Grace be past with the Fig-tree*, but according to the Observation, *There be some Professors whose Day of Grace will end with* Cut it down; and according to the words of the Text, *Then* [*after that*] *thou shalt cut it down: After that*, that is, after all my Attempts and Endeavours to make it fruitful, after I have left it, given it over, done with it, and have resolved to bestow no more Days of Grace, Opportunities of Grace, and Means of Grace upon it; then, *after that* thou shalt cut it down.

Besides, the *giving up* of the *Fig-tree*, is before the Execution. Execution is not always

ways presently on the Sentence given; for *after that* a convenient Time is thought on, and then is *cutting down*: And so it is here in the Text. The Decree, that it shall perish, is gathered from its continuing fruitless all the last Year, and at the end of all Endeavours: But *cutting down* is not yet, for that comes with an after-word; *Then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

So then, that I may orderly proceed with the Observation, I must lay down these two Propositions.

Prop. 1. *That the Day of Grace ends with some Men before God takes them out of this World.* And,

Prop. 2. *The Death, or cutting down of such Men, will be dreadful.* For this *cut it down*, when it is understood in the largest sense, (as here indeed it ought) it sheweth, not only the Wrath of God against a Man's Life in this World, but his Wrath against him Body and Soul; and is as much as to say, Cut him off from all the Privileges and Benefits that come by Grace, both in this World, and that which is to come.

But to proceed, *The Day of Grace ends with some Men before God taketh them out of this World.*

I shall give you some Instances of this,

and ſo go on to the laſt Propoſition.

Firſt, I ſhall inſtance in *Cain*; *Cain* was a Profeſſor, (*Gen.* 4. 3.) a Sacrificer, a Worſhipper of God, yea the firſt Worſhipper that we read of after the Fall; but his Grapes were wild ones, *Gen.* 4. 5, 8. *his Works were evil*, he did not do what he did from true Goſpel-motives; therefore God diſallowed his Work. At this his Countenance falls: Wherefore he envies his Brother, diſputes him, takes his opportunity and kills him. Now in the day he did this act, were the Heavens cloſed up againſt him, and that himſelf did ſmartingly and fearfully feel, when God made Inquiſition for the Blood of *Abel*; *And now curſed* (ſaid God) *ſhalt thou be from the Earth, which hath opened her Mouth to receive thy Brother's Blood from thy Hand*, &c. *Gen.* 4. 8, 11, 12, 13, 14. *And* Cain *ſaid, My Puniſhment is greater than I can bear: Mine Iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven. Behold, thou haſt driven me out this Day from the Face of the Earth, and from thy Face ſhall I be hid.* Now thou art curſed, ſaith God. Thou haſt driven me out this Day, ſaith *Cain*, and from thy Face ſhall I be hid; I ſhall never more have Hope in thee, Smile from thee, nor expect Mercy

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at thy Hand. Thus therefore, *Cain*'s Day of Grace ended, and the Heavens, with God's own Heart, were ſhut up againſt him; yet after this, he lived long, *Gen.* 4. 10. *Cutting down* was not come yet; after this he lived to marry a Wife, *verſ.* 17. to beget a curſed Brood, to build a City, (and what not?) all which could not be quickly done: Wherefore *Cain* might live after the Day of Grace was paſt with him, ſeveral hundred years.

Secondly, I ſhall inſtance in *Iſhmael*, Gen. 17. 25, 26. *Iſhmael* was a Profeſſor, was brought up in *Abraham*'s Family, and was circumciſed at *thirteen years of Age*, Gen. 16. 12. But he was the Son of the *Bond-woman*, he brought not forth good Fruit, he was a *wild Profeſſor*: For all his Religion, he would ſcoff at thoſe that were better than himſelf. Well, upon a day his Brother *Iſaac* was weaned, at which time his Father made a Feaſt, and rejoiced before the Lord, for that he had given him the promiſed Son; *at this* Iſhmael *mocked* them, their Son, and Godly rejoicing. Then came the Spirit of God upon *Sarah*, and ſhe cried, *Caſt him out, caſt out this Bond-woman and her Son; for the Son of this Bond-woman ſhall not be Heir with*

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my Son, with Iſaac, *Gen.* 21. 9, 10, 11. Now *Paul* to the *Galatians*, (Chap. 4. 29, 30, 31.) makes this caſting out to be, not only a caſting out of *Abraham*'s Family, but a caſting out alſo *from a Lot with the Saints in Heaven.* Alſo *Moſes* giveth us a notable proof thereof, in ſaying, that when he died, *he was gathered to his People*, Gen. 25. 17. his People by his Mother's ſide, for he was reckoned from her, the Son of *Hagar*, the Son of the Bond-woman. Now ſhe was deſcended from the *Egyptians*, Gen. 21. 9. So that he was gathered when he died, notwithſtanding his Profeſſion, to the place that *Pharaoh* and his Hoſt were gathered to, who were drowned in the *Red Sea*; theſe were his People, and he was of them, both by Nature and Diſpoſition, by perſecuting as they did. But now, *When did the Day of Grace end with this Man?* Obſerve, and I will ſhew you: *Iſhmael* was *thirteen years old* when he was circumciſed; and then was *Abraham ninety years* old and *nine*, Gen. 17. 24, 25, 26. The next year *Iſaac* was born. So that *Iſhmael* was now *fourteen* Years of Age. Now when *Iſaac* was weaned, (ſuppoſe he ſuck'd four Years) by that account, *The Day of Grace muſt be ended with* Iſhmael, *by that time*

time he was eighteen years old, Gen. 25. 12, &c. For that day he mocked, that day it was ſaid, *Caſt him out*; and of that caſting out the Apoſtle makes what I have ſaid. Beware ye young barren Profeſſors. Now *Iſhmael* lived an *hundred and nineteen* years after this, in great Tranquillity and Honour with Men: After this he alſo begat *twelve* Princes, even after his Day of Grace was paſt.

Thirdly, I ſhall inſtance *Eſau*, Gen. 25. 27, *&c.* *Eſau* alſo was a Profeſſor, he was born unto *Iſaac*, and circumciſed according to the Cuſtom: But *Eſau* was a gameſom Profeſſor, an Huntſman, a Man of the Field; alſo he was wedded to his Luſts, which he did alſo venture to keep, rather than the Birth-right. Well, upon a day when he came from hunting, and was faint, he ſold his Birth-right to *Jacob* his Brother. Now the Birth-right, in thoſe days, had the Promiſe and Bleſſing annexed to it. Yea, they were ſo entailed in this, that the one could not go without the other; wherefore the Apoſtle's Caution is here of weight, *Heb.* 12. 16, 17. *Take heed*, ſaith he, *leſt there be among you a Fornicator, or profane Perſon as* Eſau, *who for one morſel of Meat ſold Birth-right: for ye know how that afterwards*

when

when he would have inherited the Bleſſing, he was rejected; for he found no place of Repentance, though he ſought it carefully with Tears. Now the ending of *Eſau*'s Day of Grace is to be reckoned from his ſelling of his Birth-right: For there the Apoſtle points it, leſt there be among you any, that like *Eſau*, ſells his Birth-right; for then goes hence the Bleſſing alſo.

But *Eſau* ſold his Birth-right long before his Death. *Twenty* Years after this, *Jacob* was with *Laban*, (Gen. 31. 41. and 32. 6.) and when he returned home, his Brother *Eſau* met him. Further, after this when *Jacob* dwelt again ſome time with his Father, then *Jacob* and *Eſau* buried him. I ſuppoſe (*Gen.* 35. 28, 29.) he might live above *forty*, yea for ought I know above *fourſcore* years after he had ſold his Birth-right, and ſo conſequently had put himſelf out of the Grace of God.

Three things I would further note upon theſe *three* Profeſſors.

Firſt, *Cain* an angry Profeſſor, *Iſhmael* a mocking one, *Eſau* a luſtful, gameſome one: *Three Symptoms* of a barren Profeſſor. For he that can be angry, and that can mock, and that can indulge his Luſts, cannot bring forth Fruit to God.

Secondly,

Secondly, The Day of Grace ended with these Professors at that time when they committed some grievous Sin; as *Cain*, when he killed his Brother; *Ishmael*, when he mocked at *Isaac*, &c. and *Esau*, when out of love to his Lusts, he despised, and sold his Birth-right. Beware, barren Professor; *Thou mayst do that in half a quarter of an hour, from the Evil of which thou mayst not be delivered for ever and ever.*

Thirdly, Yet these *three*, *after their Day of Grace was over*, lived better Lives as to outward things, than ever they did before. *Cain*, *after this*, was Lord of a City, *Gen.* 4. 17. *Ishmael* was *after this*, Father of *twelve* Princes, *Gen.* 25. 16. and *Esau*, *after this*, told his Brother, *I have enough, my Brother, keep that thou hast to thy self*, Chap. 33. 8, 9. Ease, and Peace, and a prosperous Life in Outwards, are no sign of the Favour of God to a barren and fruitless Professor; but rather of his *Wrath*, that thereby he may be capable to treasure up *more* Wrath, against the *Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.*

Let thus much serve for the proof of the *first* Proposition, namely, *That the Day of Grace ends with some Men, before God takes them out of this World.*

Now

Now then to ſhew you, by ſome Signs, how you may know that the Day of Grace is ended, or near to ending with the barren Profeſſor; *And after that thou ſhalt cut it down.*

Firſt; He that hath ſtood it out againſt God, and withſtood all thoſe Means for Fruit, that God uſed for the making of him (if it might have been) a fruitful Tree in his Garden, is in this danger; and this indeed is the *Sum* of the Parable. The Fig-tree here mentioned, was bleſſed with the Application of Means, had time allowed it to receive the Nouriſhment; but it out-ſtood, withſtood, overſtood *All*, *All* that the Husband-man or the Vine-dreſſer did.

Signs of being paſt Grace.

But a little diſtinctly to particularize in *four* or *five* Particulars.

Firſt *Sign.* The Day of Grace is like to be paſt, when a Profeſſor hath withſtood, abuſed, *and worn out God's Patience*; then he is in danger, this is a Provocation; then God cries, *Cut it down.* There are ſome Men that ſteal into a Profeſſion, *no body knows how*; even as this Fig-tree was brought into the Vineyard, by other Hands than God's; and there they abide lifeleſs,

grace-

graceleſs, careleſs, *and without any good Conſcience to God at all.* Perhaps they came in for the Loaves, for a Trade, for Credit, for a Blind; or it may be to ſtifle and choak the Checks, and grinding Pangs of an awakened and diſquieted Conſcience. Now having obtain'd their purpoſe, *like the Sinners of* Sion, they are at eaſe, and ſecure; ſaying, like *Agag*, 1 Sam. 15. 32. *Surely the bitterneſs of Death is paſt*; I am well, ſhall be ſaved, and go to Heaven: Thus in theſe vain Conceits *it ſpends a Year, two* or *three*; not remembring that at every Seaſon of Grace, and at every Opportunity of the Goſpel, *the Lord comes ſeeking Fruit. Well*, Sinner, *well barren Fig-tree*, this is but a coarſe beginning: God comes for Fruit. What have I here, ſaith God? What a Fig-tree is this, that hath ſtood this year in my Vineyard, and brought me forth no Fruit? I will cry unto him, *Profeſſor! barren Fig-tree*, be fruitful! I look for Fruit, I expect Fruit, I muſt have Fruit, therefore bethink thy ſelf. At theſe the Profeſſor pauſes; but theſe are Words, not Blows, therefore off goes this Conſideration from the Heart. When God comes the next Year, he finds him ſtill as he was, a *barren*, fruitleſs *Cumber-ground*. And now

again

again he complains, here are *two Years gone*, and no Fruit appears: Well, I will defer mine Anger for my Name sake; *Isa.* 48. 9. *I will defer mine Anger for my Praise, I will refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off* (as yet.) I will wait, I will yet wait to be gracious. But this helps not, this hath not the least Influence upon the barren Fig-tree; *Tush*, saith he, here is no Threatning: *God is merciful*, he will defer his Anger, *Isa.* 30. 18. He waits to be gracious: *I am not yet afraid.* O how do ungodly Men, that crept unawares into the Vineyard, *turn the Grace of our God into Lasciviousness!* Well, he comes the third Year for Fruit, as he did before, but still he finds *but a barren Fig-tree: No Fruit:* Now he cries out again, *O thou Dresser of my Vineyard*, come hither, here's a *Fig-tree* hath stood these *three Years* in my Vineyard, and hath at every Season disappointed my Expectation, for I have looked for Fruit in vain; *Cut it down*, my Patience is worn out, *I shall wait on this Fig-tree no longer.*

2. And now he begins to shake the Fig-tree with his Threatnings; fetch out the *Ax.* Now the *Ax* is Death, Death therefore is called for; Death, come smite me this Fig-tree. And withal the Lord shakes this

this Sinner, and whirls him upon a Sick-bed, saying, *Take him Death*, he hath abused my Patience and Forbearance, not remembring that it should have led him to Repentance, and to the Fruits thereof. *Death, fetch away this Fig-tree to the Fire*, fetch this barren Professor to Hell. At this, Death comes with grim Looks into the Chamber; yea, and Hell follows with him to the Bed-side, and both stare this Professor in the Face, yea begin to lay hands upon him; one smiting him with Pains in his Body, with Head-ach, Heart-ach, Back-ach, Shortness of Breath, Fainting, Qualms, trembling of Joints, stopping at the Chest, and almost all the Symptoms of a Man past all recovery. Now while *Death* is thus tormenting the Body, *Hell* is doing with the Mind and Conscience, striking them with its Pains, casting Sparks of Fire in thither, wounding with Sorrows and Fears of everlasting Damnation, the Spirit of this poor Creature: And now he begins to bethink himself, and to cry to God for Mercy; *Lord, spare me, Lord, spare me.* Nay, saith God, you have been a Provocation to me *these three* Years. How many times have you disappointed me? How many Seasons have you spent in vain? How many Sermons and

other

other Mercies did I of my Patience afford you? but to no purpoſe at all; *Take him Death.* O good Lord, ſaith the Sinner, ſpare me but *this once*; raiſe me but *this once.* Indeed I have been a barren Profeſſor, and have ſtood to no purpoſe at all in thy Vineyard: But ſpare! O ſpare this *one time*, I beſeech thee, and I will be better. *Away, away*, you will not: I have tried you *theſe three Years* already, you are naught; if I ſhould recover you again, you would be as bad as you was before (and all this Talk is while Death ſtands by.) The Sinner cries again, good Lord, try me *this once*, let me get up again *this once*, and *ſee* if I do not mend. But will you promiſe me to mend? Yes indeed, Lord, and vow it too; I will never be ſo bad again, *I will be better.* Well, ſaith God, *Death*, let this Profeſſor alone *for this time.* I will try him a while longer, he hath promiſed, he hath vowed that he will amend his Ways: It may be he will mind to keep his Promiſes. *Vows* are ſolemn things, it may be he may *fear to break his Vows:* Ariſe from off thy Bed. And *now God lays down his Ax.* At this the poor Creature is very thankful, praiſes God, and fawns upon him; ſhews as if he did it heartily, and calls to others

to

to thank him too. He therefore riſeth, as one would think, to be a new Creature indeed. But by that time he hath put on his Clothes, is come down from his Bed, and ventured into the Yard, or Shop, and there ſees how all things are gone to *Sixes* and *Sevens*, he begins to have *ſecond* Thoughts; and ſays to his Folks, What have you all been doing? How are all things out of order? I am I cannot tell what behind-hand; one may ſee if a Man be but a little a toſide, that you have neither Wiſdom, nor Prudence to order things. And now, inſtead of ſeeking to ſpend the reſt of his time to God, *he doubleth his Diligence after this World:* Alas, all muſt not be loſt, *we muſt have provident care.* And thus quite forgetting the Sorrows of Death, the Pains of Hell, the Promiſes and Vows which he made to God to be better; *Becauſe Judgment was not* (now) *ſpeedily executed, therefore the Heart of this poor Creature is fully ſet in him to do evil.*

3. Theſe things proving ineffectual, *God takes hold of his* Ax *again*, ſends Death to a Wife, to a Child, to his Cattel, (*Your young Men have I ſlain, and taken away your Horſes*, Amos. 4. 9, 10.) I will blaſt him, croſs him, diſappoint him, and caſt him down;

down; and will ſet my ſelf againſt him, *in all that he putteth his Hand unto.* At this the poor *barren Profeſſor* cries out again, Lord, I have ſinned, ſpare me once more, I beſeech thee. O take not away *the Deſire of mine Eyes*; ſpare my Children, bleſs me in my Labours, and I will mend and be better! No, ſaith God, you lied to me laſt time, I will truſt you *in this* no longer; and withal, tumbles the Wife, the Child, the Eſtate, into a Grave. And then returns to his place, till this Profeſſor more unfeignedly acknowledgeth his Offence, *Hoſ.* 5. 14, 15.

At this the poor Creature is afflicted and diſtreſſed, rends his Clothes, and begins to call the breaking of his Promiſe and Vows to mind; he mourns and prays, and like *Ahab, a while walks ſoftly*, at the remembrance of the Juſtneſs of the Hand of God upon him. And now he renews his Promiſes, Lord, try me *this one time more*, take off thy Hand and ſee; *They go far that never turn.* Well, God ſpareth him again, ſets down his *Ax* again: *Many times he did deliver them, but they provoked him with their Counſels, and were brought low for their Iniquities*, Pſal. 106. 43. Now they ſeem to be thankful again, and are as if they were reſolved to be godly indeed. Now they

they Read, they Pray, they go to Meetings, and ſeem to be ſerious a pretty while, but at laſt they forget. Their Luſts prick them, ſutable Temptations preſent themſelves; wherefore they turn to their own crooked Ways again. Pſ. 78. 34, 36. *When he ſlew them, then they ſought him, and returned early after God; nevertheleſs they did flatter him with their Mouth, and lied unto him with their Tongue.*

4. Yet again, the Lord will not leave this Profeſſor, but takes up his *Ax* again, and puts him under a more heart-ſearching Miniſtry, a Miniſtry that ſhall ſearch him, and turn him over and over; a Miniſtry that ſhall meet with him, as *Elijah* met with *Ahab*, in all his Acts of Wickedneſs, (and *now the Ax is laid to the Roots of the Trees.*) Beſides, this Miniſtry doth not only ſearch the Heart, but preſents the Sinner with the *golden* Rays of the glorious Goſpel: *Now is Chriſt Jeſus ſet forth evidently*, now is Grace diſplayed ſweetly; now, now are the Promiſes broken like *Boxes* of *Ointment* to the perfuming of the whole Room. *But, alas, there is yet no Fruit on this Fig-tree.* While his Heart is ſearching, he wrangles; while the glorious Grace of the Goſpel is unvailing, this Profeſſor wags and is wanton,

ton, gathers up ſome *ſcraps* thereof, *taſtes the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come*, Heb. 6. 5. drinks in the Rain that comes oft upon him, *ver.* 7. *But bringeth not forth Fruit meet for him whoſe Goſpel it is*; ver. 8. *takes no heed to walk in the Law of the Lord God of* Iſrael *with all his Heart*, 2 King. 10. 31. but counts that the Glory of the Goſpel conſiſts in talk and ſhew, and that our Obedience thereto is a matter of *Speculation*; that good *Works* lie in good *Words*; and if they can *finely* talk, they think they *bravely* pleaſe God. They think the Kingdom of God conſiſts only in Word, not in Power: and thus proves ineffectual this *fourth* Means alſo.

5. Well, now the *Ax* begins to be heaved higher, for now indeed God is ready to ſmite the Sinner; yet before he will ſtrike the ſtroak, he will try one way more at the laſt; and if that miſſeth, *down goes the Fig-tree.* Now this laſt way is *to tug and ſtrive with this Profeſſor by his Spirit.* Wherefore the Spirit of the Lord is now come to him, but *not always to ſtrive with Man*, Gen. 6. 8. yet for ſome while he will ſtrive with him, he will *awaken*, he will *convince*, he will call to remembrance former

former Sins, former Judgments, the breach of former Vows and Promiſes, the miſpending of former Days; he will alſo preſent perſwaſive Arguments, encouraging Promiſes, dreadful Judgments, the ſhortneſs of time to repent in, and that there is hope if he come. Further, he will ſhew him the certainty of Death, and Judgment to come; yea, he will pull and ſtrive with this Sinner. But, behold, the miſchief now lies here, here is tugging and ſtriving on both ſides. The *Spirit* convinces, the *Man* turns a deaf Ear to God: the *Spirit* ſaith, Receive my Inſtruction and live; but the *Man* pulls away his Shoulder: the *Spirit* ſhews him whither he is going, but the *Man* cloſeth his Eyes againſt it; the *Spirit* offereth violence, the *Man* ſtrives and reſiſts: *They have done deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace*, Heb. 10. 29. The Spirit *parleth* a *ſecond* time, and urgeth Reaſons of a new Nature; but the Sinner anſwers, *No, I have loved ſtrangers, and after them will I go.* At this God's Fury comes up into his Face, now he comes out of his holy Place, and is terrible: now He *ſweareth in his Wrath, they ſhall never enter into his Reſt*; I exerciſed towards you my Patience, and ſmote you in your Perſon, Relations and Eſtate, yet you have

not

not turned unto me, ſaith the Lord. *In thy filthineſs is lewdneſs; becauſe I have purged thee, and thou waſt not purged, thou ſhalt not be purged from thy filthineſs any more, till I cauſe my Fury to reſt upon thee.* Ezek. 24. 13. *Cut it down, why cumbers it the ground?*

The *Second Sign*, That ſuch a Profeſſor is almoſt (if not quite) paſt Grace, is, *when God hath given him over, or lets him alone*, and ſuffers him to do any thing, and that without controul, helpeth him not either in Works of Holineſs, or in Straits and Difficulties. *Ephraim is joined to Idols, let him alone*, Hoſ. 4. 17. *Wo be to them when I depart from them. I will laugh at their Calamities, and will mock when their Fear cometh*, Prov. 24 — 28.

Barren Fig-tree, thou haſt heretofore been digged about and dunged, God's Mattock hath heretofore been at thy roots, Goſpel-dung hath heretofore been applied to thee; thou haſt heretofore been ſtrove with, convinced, awakened, made to taſte and ſee, and cry, *O the Bleſſedneſs!* Thou haſt heretofore been met with under the Word; thy Heart hath melted, thy Spirit hath fallen, thy Soul hath trembled, and thou haſt felt ſomething of the Power of the Goſpel.

But

But thou haſt ſinned, thou haſt provoked the Eyes of his Glory, thy Iniquity is found to be hateful; and now perhaps God hath left thee, given thee up, *and lets thee alone.*

Heretofore thou waſt tender, thy Conſcience ſtartled at the Temptation to Wickedneſs; for thou were taken off from *the pollutions of the World, through the knowledg of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*, 2 Pet. 2. 20, 21, 22. but that very *Vomit* that once thou wert turned from, now thou lappeſt up (with the *Dog* in the *Proverb*) again; and that very *Mire* that once thou ſeemedſt to to be waſhed from, *thou now art tumbling in afreſh.* But to particularize, there are *three Signs* of a Man's being given over of God.

1. When he is let alone in Sinning, *when the reins of his Luſts are looſed*, and he given up to them. *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledg, God gave them over to a reprobate Mind, to do thoſe things which are not convenient; being filled with all Unrighteouſneſs*, Rom. 1. 28, 29. Seeſt thou a Man that heretofore had the knowledg of God, and ſome awe of Majeſty upon him; I ſay, ſeeſt thou ſuch an one, *ſporting himſelf in his own Deceivings*, Rom. 1. 30, 31. turning the Grace of our God

into Laſciviouſneſs, and walking after his own ungodly Luſts? his Judgment now of a long time lingereth not, *and his Damnation ſlumbereth not*, 2 Pet. 2. 13. Doſt thou hear, barren Profeſſor? It is aſtoniſhing to ſee, how thoſe that once ſeemed *Sons of the Morning*, and were making Preparations for Eternal Life, now at laſt (for the rottenneſs of their Hearts, by the juſt Judgment of God) permitted, being paſt feeling, to give themſelves over unto Laſciviouſneſs, *to work all Uncleanneſs with greedineſs*, Eph. 4. 18, 19. A great number of ſuch were in the *firſt* Goſpel-days; againſt whom *Peter*, and *Jude*, and *John* pronounced the heavy Judgment of God. *Peter* and *Jude* couple them *with the fallen Angels*, 2 Pet. 2. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. and Prayer is forbid to be made for them, becauſe that is hapned to them that hapned to the Angels that fell, *Jude* v. 6. *Who for forſaking their firſt State, and leaving their own Habitation, are reſerved in Chains under everlaſting Darkneſs, unto the Judgment of the great Day.*

1. Theſe are beyond all Mercy. 2. They are beyond all Promiſes. 3. Beyond all hopes of Repentance. 4. They have no Interceſſor, nor any more ſhare in a Sacrifice for Sin. 5. There remains nothing but a

ſearful

fearful looking for of Judgment. Wherefore, 6. They are the true Fugitives and Vagabonds, that being left of God, of Christ, of Grace, and of the Promise, and being beyond all hope, wander and straggle to and fro, even as the Devil their Associate, until their time shall come to die, or until they descend into Battel and perish.

2. Wherefore they are let alone in hearing. If these at any time come under the Word, there is for them *no* God, *no* savour of the means of Grace, *no* stirrings of Heart, *no* pity for themselves, *no* love to their own Salvation. Let them look on this hand or that, there they see such effects of the Word in others as produce Signs of Repentance, and Love to God and his Christ. *These Men only have their backs bowed down alway*, Rom. 11. 10. These Men only *have the spirit of Slumber, Eyes that they should not see, and Ears that they should not hear to this very day.* Wherefore as they go to the place of the Holy; *So they come from the place of the Holy, and soon are forgotten in the places where they so did*, Eccl. 8. 10. Only they reap this Damage, *They treasure up Wrath against the day of Wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God*, Rom. 2. 3, 4, 5. Look to it, *barren Professor.*

3. If he be viſited after the common way of Mankind, either with Sickneſs, Diſtreſs, or any kind of Calamity, ſtill no God appears, no ſanctifying Hand of God, no ſpecial Mercy is mixed with the Affliction. But he falls ſick, and grows well, *like the Beaſt*; or is under diſtreſs, as *Saul*, who when he was engaged by the Philiſtines, was forſaken and left of God; 1 *Sam.* 28. 4, 5, 6. *And the Philiſtines gathered themſelves together, and came and pitched in* Shunem; *and* Saul *gathered all* Iſrael *together, and they came and pitched at* Gilboa: *And when* Saul *ſaw the Hoſt of the Philiſtines, he was afraid, and his Heart greatly trembled. And when* Saul *enquired of the Lord, the Lord anſwered him no more, neither by Dream, nor by* Urim, *nor by Prophets.* The Lord anſwered him *no* more, he had done with him, caſt him off, and rejected him, and left him to ſtand and fall with his Sins by himſelf. But of this more in the *Concluſion*, therefore I here forbear.

4. Theſe Men may go whither they will, do what they will; they may range from Opinion to Opinion, from Notion to Notion, from *Sect to Sect*, but are ſtedfaſt no where, they are left to their own Uncertainties: they have not Grace to eſtabliſh their Hearts;

Hearts; and tho ſome of them have boaſted themſelves of this *Liberty*, yet *Jude* calls them *wandering Stars, to whom is reſerved the blackneſs of Darkneſs for ever*, ver. 13. They are left, as I ſaid, to be Fugitives and Vagabonds in the Earth, to wander every where, but to abide no where, until they ſhall deſcend *to their own place*, (Acts 1. 5.) with *Cain* and *Judas*, Men of the ſame Fate with themſelves.

A *Third Sign* that ſuch a Profeſſor is quite paſt Grace, is, When his Heart is grown ſo hard, ſo ſtony and impenetrable, that nothing will pierce it. *Barren Fig-tree, doſt thou conſider?* A hard and impenitent Heart is the Curſe of God. A Heart that cannot repent, is inſtead of all Plagues at once: And hence it is that God ſaid of *Pharaoh*, Exod. 9. 14. when he ſpake of delivering him up in the greatneſs of his Anger, *I will at this time ſend all my Plagues upon thy Heart.*

To ſome Men that have grievouſly ſinned under a Profeſſion of the Goſpel, God giveth this *Token* of his Diſpleaſure, they are denied the Power of Repentance, their Heart is bound, they cannot repent: It is impoſſible that they ſhould ever repent, ſhould they live a *thouſand* Years; *It is im-*

poſſible for thoſe Fall-a-ways *to be renewed again unto Repentance, ſeeing they crucify to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put him to open ſhame*, Heb. 6. 4, 5, 6. Now to have the Heart ſo hardned, *ſo judicially hardned*, is as a bar put in by God againſt the Salvation of *this* Sinner. This was the burden of *Spira*'s Complaint, *I cannot do it*; *O now I cannot do it.*

This Man ſees what he hath done, what ſhould help him, and what will become of him, yet he cannot repent; he pulled away his Shoulder before, he ſtopped his Ears before, he ſhut up his Eyes before, *and in that very Poſture God left him*, and ſo he ſtands to this very Day. I have fancied that *Lot*'s Wife, when turned into a Pillar of Salt, (*Gen.* 19. 26.) ſtood yet looking over her Shoulder, or elſe with her Face towards *Sodom*; as the Judgment caught her, ſo it bound her, and left her a Monument of God's Anger to after-Generations.

We read of ſome that are *ſeared with an hot Iron*, and that are *paſt feeling*; for ſo ſeared Perſons, in ſeared Parts are. Their *Conſcience is ſeared*, 1 Tim. 4. 2. The Conſcience is the thing that muſt be touched with Feeling, Fear and *Remorſe*, if ever any good be done with the Sinner. How then

can any good be done to thoſe whoſe Conſcience is *worſe than that, that is faſt aſleep in Sin?* Eph. 4. 19. For that Conſcience that is faſt aſleep, may yet be effectually awakened and ſaved; but that Conſcience *that is ſeared*, dried, as it were, into a *Cinder*, can never have ſenſe, feeling, or the leaſt regret in this World. Barren Fig-tree, hearken, *judicial hardning is dreadful.* There is a difference betwixt that hardneſs of Heart that is incident to all Men, and that which comes upon ſome as a ſignal or ſpecial Judgment of God: and altho all kind of hardneſs of Heart, in ſome ſenſe may be called a Judgment, yet to be hardned with this *ſecond* kind, is a Judgment peculiar only to them that periſh; an Hardneſs that is ſent as a puniſhment, *for the abuſe of Light received, for a reward of Apoſtacy.*

This *Judicial* Hardneſs is diſcovered from that which is incident to all Men, in theſe Particulars:

1. It is an Hardneſs coming after ſome great Light received: *Becauſe of ſome great Sin committed againſt the Light, and the Grace that gave it.* Such Hardneſs as *Pharaoh* had, after the Lord had wrought wonderouſly before him: Such *Hardneſs* as the *Gentiles* had, an *Hardneſs* that darkned the

Heart, an *Hardneſs* which made their Minds *reprobate*. *This Hardneſs* is alſo the ſame with that the *Hebrews* are cautioned to beware of, (*Heb.* 3. 7, &c.) an *Hardneſs* that is cauſed by Unbelief, and departing from the Living God; an *Hardneſs* compleated thrô the deceitfulneſs of Sin: Such as that in the Provocation, of whom God ſware, that they ſhould not enter into his *Reſt*. 'Twas this kind of *Hardneſs* alſo that both *Cain*, *Iſhmael*, and *Eſau* were hardned with, after they had committed *their great Tranſgreſſions*.

2. It is the *greateſt* kind of *Hardneſs*, and hence they are ſaid to be *harder than a Rock*, Jer. 5. 3. or than an *Adamant*, Zec. 7. 13. that is, *harder than a Flint*: So hard that nothing can enter.

3. It is an *Hardneſs* given in much Anger, and that to bind the Soul up in an impoſſibility of Repentance.

4. It is an *Hardneſs* therefore that is incurable, of which a Man muſt die and be damned. *Barren Profeſſor, hearken to this.*

A *Fourth Sign* that ſuch a Profeſſor is quite paſt Grace, is, when he fortifies his hard Heart againſt the *tenour* of God's Word, *Job* 9. 4, &c. This is called *hardning themſelves againſt God, and turning of the Spi-*

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rit againſt him. As thus, when after a Profeſſion of Faith in the Lord Jeſus, and of the Doctrine that is according to Godlineſs, they ſhall embolden themſelves in courſes of Sin, *by promiſing themſelves that they ſhall have Life and Salvation notwithſtanding. Barren Profeſſor*, hearken to this. This Man is called, (*Deut.* 29. 18.) *A Root that beareth Gall and Wormwood, or a poiſonful Herb*; ſuch an one is abominated of God, yea, the abhorred of his Soul. For this Man ſaith, v. 19. *I ſhall have Peace, though I walk in the imagination or ſtubbornneſs of my Heart, to add Drunkenneſs to Thirſt*: an Opinion flat againſt the whole Word of God, yea againſt the very Nature of God himſelf. Wherefore he adds, *Deut.* 19. 20. *Then the Anger of the Lord, and his Jealouſy ſhall ſmoak againſt that Man; and all the Curſes that are written in God's Book ſhall lie upon him, and God ſhall blot out his Name from under Heaven.*

Yea, that Man ſhall not fail to be effectually deſtroyed; *verſ.* 21. *The Lord ſhall ſeparate that Man unto Evil, out of all the Tribes of* Iſrael, *according to all the Curſes of the Covenant.*

He ſhall ſeparate him unto Evil; He ſhall give him up, he ſhall leave him to his Heart;

he ſhall ſeparate him to *that*, or *thoſe* that will aſſuredly be too hard for him.

Now this Judgment is effected when God has given a Man up unto *Satan*, and given *Satan* leave, *without fail*, to compleat his Deſtruction. I ſay, *when God has given Satan leave effectually to compleat his Deſtruction:* For all that are delivered up unto Satan, have not, nor do not come to this End. But *that* is the Man, whom God ſhall ſeparate to Evil, and ſhall *leave* in the Hands of *Satan*, to *compleat*, without fail, his Deſtruction.

Thus he ſerved *Ahab*, a Man *that ſold himſelf to work Wickedneſs in God's ſight*, 1 King. 21. 25. *And the Lord ſaid, Who ſhall perſwade* Ahab, *that he may go up, and fall at* Ramoth-Gilead? *And one ſaid on this manner, and another ſaid on that manner: And there came forth a Spirit, and ſtood before the Lord, and ſaid, I will perſwade him*, 1 King. 22. 20, 21, 22. *And the Lord ſaid unto him, Wherewith? And he ſaid, I will go forth, and be a lying Spirit in the mouth of all his Prophets. And he ſaid, Thou ſhalt perſwade him, and prevail alſo; go forth, and do ſo.* Thou ſhalt perſwade him, *and prevail*; do thy Will, I leave him in thy Hand; *Go forth, and do ſo.*

Where-

Wherefore in theſe Judgments, the Lord much concerns himſelf for the management thereof, becauſe of their Provocation of him. This is the Man, *whoſe Ruin contriveth, and bringeth to paſs by his own contrivance. I will chuſe their deluſions for them; I will bring their fears upon them,* Iſa. 66. 4. I will chuſe their *Devices*, or the Wickedneſſes that their Hearts contrive. I, even I, will cauſe them to be accepted of, and delightful to them. But who are they that muſt thus be ſeared? Why, thoſe among Profeſſors, that have choſen *their own ways, whoſe Soul delights in their own Abominations.*

Becauſe they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be ſaved; for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong Deluſions, that they ſhould believe a Lie, that they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs. God ſhall ſend them.] It is a great word: Yea, *God ſhall ſend them ſtrong Deluſions*; Deluſions that ſhall do, that ſhall make them believe a Lie. Why ſo? *That they all might be damned, every one of them, who believe not the Truth, but had pleaſure in Unrighteouſneſs,* 2 Theſſ. 5. 10, 11, 12.

There

There is nothing more provoking to the Lord, than for a Man to promiſe, when God threatneth; for a Man to be light of conceit, that he ſhall be ſafe, and yet to be more wicked than in former days: This Man's Soul abhors the Truth of God, no marvel therefore if God's Soul abhors him: he has invented a way contrary to God, to bring about his own Salvation; no marvel, therefore, if God invent a way to bring about his Damnation. And ſeeing that theſe Rebels are at this point, We ſhall have Peace; God will ſee whoſe Word ſhall ſtand, His or theirs.

A *Fifth Sign* of a Man being paſt Grace, is, When he ſhall at *this*, ſcoff, and inwardly *grin*, and fret againſt the Lord, ſecretly purpoſing to continue his Courſe, and put all to the venture, deſpiſing the Meſſengers of the Lord. *He that deſpiſed* Moſes's *Law, died without Mercy; of how much ſorer Puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?* &c. Heb. 10. 28.

Wherefore againſt theſe Deſpiſers *God has ſet himſelf*, and foretold, that they *ſhall* not believe but periſh. *Behold ye Deſpiſers, wonder, and periſh; for I work a Work in your days,*

days, which ye ſhall in no wiſe believe, tho a Man declare it unto you, Acts 13. 41.

After that thou ſhalt cut it down.

Thus far we have treated of the *Barren Fig-tree*, or fruitleſs Profeſſor, with ſome Signs to know him by; whereto are added alſo ſome *Signs* of thoſe who neither will or can, by any means, be fruitful, *but muſt miſerably periſh.* Now being come to the time of Execution, I ſhall ſpeak a word to that alſo, *After that thou ſhalt cut it down.*] Chriſt at laſt turns the *barren Fig-tree* over to the Juſtice of God, ſhakes his Hands of him, *and gives him up to the Fire for his Unprofitableneſs.*

Thou ſhalt cut it down.]

Two things are here to be conſidered.

1. The Executioner, *Thou*, the great, the dreadful, the Eternal God. Theſe words therefore, as I have already ſaid, ſignify that Chriſt the Mediator, thrô whom alone Salvation comes, and by whom alone Execution hath been deferred, *now giveth up the Soul*, forbears to ſpeak one *Syllable* more for him, or to do the leaſt Act of Grace further, to try for his Recovery; but delivers him

up

up to that fearful Diſpenſation, *to fall into the Hands of the living God*, Heb. 10. 31.

2. The *Second* to be conſidered, is, *The Inſtrument by which this Execution is done*, and that is *Death*, compared here to an *Ax*; and foraſmuch as the Tree is not felled at one Blow, therefore the ſtrokes are here continued, till all the blows be ſtruck that are requiſite for its *felling*: For now *cutting*-time, and *cutting*-work is come, *cutting* muſt be his Portion, till he be cut down. *After that thou ſhalt cut it down.*] Death, I ſay, is the *Ax*, that God often uſes, therewith to take the *barren Fig-tree* out of the Vine-yard, out of a Profeſſion, *and alſo out of the World at once.* But this *Ax* is now new-ground, it cometh well edged to the Roots of this *Barren Fig-tree.* It hath been whetted by Sin, by the Law, and by a *formal* Profeſſion, and therefore muſt, and will make deep gaſhes, not only in the natural Life, but in the Heart and Conſcience alſo of this Profeſſor: *The wages of Sin is Death, the ſting of Death is Sin*, 1 Cor. 15. Wherefore Death comes not to this Man as he doth to Saints, *muzzled*, or without his Sting, but with open mouth, in all his ſtrength; yea, he ſends *his Firſt-born*, which is Guilt, *to devour his ſtrength, and*

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to bring him to the King of Terrors, Job 18. 13, 14.

But to give you, in a few *Particulars*, the manner of this Man's dying.

1. Now he hath his fruitleſs *Fruits* beleaguer him round his Bed, together with all the *Bands* and *Legions* of his other Wickedneſs. *His own Iniquities ſhall take the wicked himſelf, and he ſhall be holden in the Cords of his Sins*, Prov. 5. 22.

2. Now ſome terrible diſcovery of God is made out unto him, to the perplexing and terrifying of his guilty Conſcience: *God ſhall caſt upon him, and not ſpare; and he ſhall be afraid of that which is high*, Job 27. 22.

3. The dark Entry he is to go thrô, will be a ſore Amazement unto him; *For fear ſhall be in the way*, Eccleſ. 12. 5. yea, Terrors will take hold on him, when he ſhall ſee the *yawning* Jaws of Death to gape upon him, and the Doors of the Shadow of Death open to give him Paſſage out of the World. Now who will meet me in this dark Entry; how ſhall I paſs through this dark Entry into another World!

4. For by reaſon of Guilt, and a ſhaking Conſcience, *his Life will hang in continual doubt before him, and he ſhall be afraid*

day.

day and night, Deut. 28. 66, 67. and ſhall have no aſſurance of his Life.

5. Now alſo *Want* will come up againſt him, he will come up *like an armed Man.* There is a terrible Army to him that is graceleſs in Heart, and fruitleſs in Life. This *Want* will continually cry in thine Ears, here is a new Birth *wanting*, a *new* Heart, and a *new* Spirit *wanting*; here is Faith, Love and Repentance, the Fear of God, and a good Converſation *wanting*; *Thou art weighed in the Ballance, and art found wanting*, Dan. 5. 27.

6. Together with theſe, ſtand by *the Companions of Death*, Death and Hell, Death and Devils, Death and endleſs Torment in the everlaſting Flames of devouring Fire. *When God ſhall come up unto the People, he will invade them with his Troops*, Hab. 3. 16.

But how will this Man die? Can his Heart *now* endure, or *can his Hands be ſtrong?* Ezek. 22. 14.

1. God, and Chriſt, and Pity *have left him:* Sin againſt Light, againſt Mercy, and the Long-ſuffering of God, *is come up againſt him*; his Hope and Confidence *now lie a dying by him*, and his Conſcience *totters and ſhakes* continually within him.

2. Death is at his work, *cutting of him down*,

down, hewing both Bark and Heart, both Body and Soul a-ſunder: The Man groans, but Death hears him not; he looks ghaſtly, carefully, dejectedly; he ſighs, he ſweats, he trembles, but Death matters nothing.

3. Fearful *Cogitations* haunt him, Miſgivings, direful Apprehenſions of God terrify him. Now he hath time to think what the Loſs of Heaven will be, and what the Torments of Hell will be; now he looks no way but he is frighted.

4. Now would he live, but may not; he would live tho it were but the life of a Bedrid Man, but muſt not. He that cuts him down, ſways him, as the Feller of Wood *ſways the tottering Tree*; now this way, then that: at laſt a Root breaks, an Heart-ſtring, an Eye-ſtring ſnaps aſunder.

5. And now could the Soul be *annihilated*, or brought to nothing, how happy would it count it ſelf! but it ſees that may not be. Wherefore it is put to a wonderful ſtrait: ſtay in the Body it may not, go out of the Body it dares not. *Life* is going, the *Blood* ſettles in the *Fleſh*; and the *Lungs* being no more able to draw Breath thrô the Noſtrils, at laſt out goes the weary trembling Soul, who is immediately ſeized by Devils, who lay lurking in every hole in the Chamber for

for that very purpose: His Friends take care of the Body, wrap it up in the *Sheet* or *Coffin*; but the Soul is out of their thought and reach, going down to the Chambers of Death.

I had thought to have enlarged, but I forbear: God, who teaches Man to profit, bless this brief and plain Discourse to thy Soul, who yet standest a Professor in the Land of the Living, among the Trees of his Garden. *Amen.*

BRITISH 27 JY 97 MUSEUM

FINIS.

AN EXHORTATION TO PEACE and UNITY.

Epheſ. 4. 3.

Indeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.

BEloved, Religion is the great Bond of humane Society, and it were well if it ſelf were kept within the Bond of Unity; and that it may ſo be, let us, according to the Text, uſe our utmoſt endeavours *to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace.*

Theſe Words contain a Counſel and a Caution: the Counſel is, *That we endea-*

vour

your the Unity of the Spirit; the Caution is, *That we do it in the Bond of Peace*: as if he ſhould ſay, I would have you live in Unity, but yet I would have you to be careful, that you do not purchaſe Unity with the breach of Charity.

Let us therefore be caution'd that we do not ſo preſs after Unity in Practice and Opinion, as to break the Bond of Peace and Affection.

In the handling of theſe Words, I ſhall obſerve this Method;

Firſt, I ſhall open the Senſe of the Text.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew wherein this Unity and Peace conſiſt.

Thirdly, I ſhall ſhew you the Fruits and Benefits of it, together with nine Inconveniences and Miſchiefs that attend thoſe Churches where Unity and Peace are wanting.

Fourthly, and Laſtly, I ſhall give you twelve Directions and Motives for the obtaining of them.

Firſt, As touching the Senſe of the Text: When we are counſelled to keep the Unity of the Spirit, we are not to underſtand the Spirit

Spirit of God, as perſonally ſo conſidered; becauſe the Spirit of God in that ſenſe, is not capable of being divided; and ſo there would be no need for us to endeavour to keep the Unity of it.

By the Unity of the Spirit then, we are to underſtand, that Unity of Mind which the Spirit of God calls for, and requires Chriſtians to endeavour after; hence it is that we are exhorted, by *one Spirit, with one Mind, to ſtrive together for the Faith of the Goſpel*, Phil. 1. 27. But further: The Apoſtle in theſe words alludes to the ſtate and compoſition of a Natural Body, and thereby informs us, that the Myſtical Body of Chriſt holds an Analogy with the Natural Body of a Man: As,

1. In the Natural Body there muſt be a Spirit to animate it, for the Body without the Spirit is dead, *James* 2. 26. So it is in the Myſtical Body of Chriſt; the Apoſtle no ſooner tells us of that one Body, but he minds us of that one Spirit, *Eph.* 4. 4.

2. The Body hath Joints and Bands to unite all the parts; ſo hath the Myſtical Body of Chriſt, *Col.* 2. 19. This is that Bond of Peace mentioned in the Text, as alſo in the 16*th* Verſe of the ſame Chapter, where the whole Body is ſaid to be fitly joined together,

gether, and compacted, by that which every Joint ſupplieth.

3. The Natural Body receives Counſel and Nouriſhment from the Head; ſo doth the Myſtical Body of Chriſt, he is their Counſellor, and him they muſt hear; he is their Head, and him they muſt hold: hence it is that the Apoſtle complaineth, *Col.* 2. 19. of ſome that did not hold the Head, from which the whole Body by Joints and Bands hath Nouriſhment.

4. The Natural Body cannot well ſubſiſt, if either the Spirit be wounded, or the Joints broken or diſlocated; the Body cannot bear a wounded or broken Spirit: *A broken Spirit drieth the Bones*, Prov. 17. 22. *And a wounded Spirit who can bear?* Prov. 18. 14. And on the other hand, how often have the diſjointings of the Body, and the breakings thereof, occaſioned the Expiration of the Spirit? In like manner it fares with the Myſtical Body of Chriſt, how do divided Spirits break the Bonds of Peace, which are the Joints of his Body? And how do the breakings of the Body and Church of Chriſt wound the Spirit of Chriſtians, and oftentimes occaſion the Spirit and Life of Chriſtianity to languiſh, if not to expire? How needful is it then that we endeavour *the*

Unity

Secondly, I now come to ſhew you wherein this Unity and Peace conſiſt, and this I ſhall demonſtrate in five particulars.

1. This Unity and Peace may conſiſt in the ignorance of many Truths, and in the holding of ſome Errors; or elſe this Duty of Peace and Unity could not be practicable by any on this ſide Perfection: but we muſt now endeavour the Unity of the Spirit, till we come to the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledg of the Son of God, *Epheſ.* 4. 13. Becauſe now (as the Apoſtle ſaith) we know in part, and we propheſy in part, and now we ſee thrô a Glaſs darkly, 1 *Cor.* 13. 12. And as this is true in general, ſo we may find it true if we deſcend to particular Inſtances; the Diſciples ſeem to be ignorant of that great Truth, which they had often and in much plainneſs been taught by their Maſter once and again, (*viz.*) That his Kingdom was not of this World, and that in the World they ſhould ſuffer, and be perſecuted; yet in *Acts* 1. 6. we read, That they asked of him if he would at this time reſtore the Kingdom of *Iſrael?* thereby diſcovering that Chriſt's Kingdom (as they thought) ſhould conſiſt in his Temporal Juriſdiction

riſdiction over *Iſrael*, which they expected ſhould now commence and take place amongſt them. Again, our Lord tells them, that he had many things to ſay (and theſe were many important Truths) which they could not now bear, *John* 16. 12. and that theſe were important Truths, appears by *ver.* 10, 11. where he is diſcourſing of *Righteouſneſs* and *Judgment*; and then adds, that he had yet many things to ſay, which they could not bear; and thereupon promiſes the Comforter to lead them into ALL TRUTH: which implies, that they were yet ignorant of many Truths, and conſequently held divers Errors: and yet for all this he prays for, and preſſes them to their great Duty of Peace and Unity, *John* 14. 27. and 17. 21. To this may be added that of *Heb.* 5. 11. where the Author ſaith, He had many things to ſay of the Prieſtly Office of Chriſt, which by reaſon of their dulneſs, they were not capable to receive; as alſo that in *Acts* 10. where *Peter* ſeems to be ignorant of that Truth, *viz.* That the Goſpel was to be preached to all Nations; and contrary hereunto, he erred in thinking it unlawful to preach amongſt the *Gentiles*. I ſhall add two Texts more, one in *Acts* 1. 9. where we read, That thoſe Diſciples which had been diſci-

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pled and baptized by *John*, were yet ignorant of the Holy Ghoth, and knew not (as the Text tells us) whether there were any Holy Ghoſt or no; tho *John* did teach conſtantly, That he that ſhould come after him, ſhould baptize with the Holy Ghoſt and Fire. From hence we may eaſily and plainly infer, that Chriſtians may be ignorant of many Truths, by reaſon of weak and dull Capacities, and other ſuch like Impediments, even while thoſe Truths are with much plainneſs delivered to them. Again, we read, *Heb.* 5. 13. of ſome that were unskilful in the Word of Righteouſneſs, who nevertheleſs are called Babes in Chriſt, and with whom Unity and Peace are to be inviolably kept and maintained.

2. As this Unity and Peace may conſiſt in the ignorance of many Truths, and in the holding of ſome Errors, ſo it muſt conſiſt with (and it cannot conſiſt without) the believing and practiſing thoſe things which are neceſſary to Salvation and Church-Communion; and they are, Firſt, Believing that Chriſt the Son of God died for the Sins of Men. Secondly, That whoever believeth, ought to be baptized: The third thing eſſential to this Communion, is an holy and a blameleſs Converſation.

First, That believing that the Son of God died for the Sins of Men, is necessary to Salvation, I prove by those Texts which tell us, that he that doth not believe shall be damned, *Mark* 16. 16. *John* 3. 36. *Rom.* 10. 19.

That it is also necessary to Church-Communion, appears from *Mat.* 16. 16, 17, 18. *Peter* having confest that Christ was the Son of the Living God, Christ thereupon assures him, that upon this Rock, *viz.* this Profession of Faith, or this Christ which *Peter* had confess'd, he would build his Church, and the Gates of Hell should not prevail against it. And 1 *Cor.* 3. 11. the Apostle having told the *Corinthians* they were God's Building, presently adds, that they could not be built upon any Foundation but that which was laid, which was Jesus Christ. All which proves, that Christian Society is founded upon the Profession of Christ. And not only Scripture, but the Laws of right Reason dictate this, that some Rules and Orders must be observed for the founding of all Society, which must be consented to by all that will be of it. Hence it comes to pass, that to own Christ as the Lord and Head of Christians, is essential to the founding of Christian Society.

Secondly,

Secondly, The Scriptures have declared that this Faith gives the Professors of it a right to Baptism, as in the case of the Eunuch, *Acts* 8. when he demanded why he might not be baptized? *Philip* answers, *That if he believed with all his Heart, he might*; the Eunuch thereupon confessing Christ, was baptized.

Now that Baptism is essential to Church-Communion, I prove from 1 *Cor.* 12. where we shall find the Apostle labouring to prevent an evil use that might be made of Spiritual Gifts, as thereby to be puft up; and to think that such as wanted them, were not of the Body, or to be esteemed Members: he thereupon resolves, that whoever did confess Christ, and own him for his Head, did it by the Spirit, *ver.* 3. tho they might not have such a visible manifestation of it as others had; and therefore they ought to be owned as Members, as appears, *ver.* 23. And not only because they have called him Lord by the Spirit, but because they have by the guidance and direction of the same Spirit been baptized, *ver.* 13. *For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one Body*, &c. I need not go about to confute that Notion that some of late have had of this Text, *viz.* That the Baptism here spoken

of, is the Baptism of the Spirit, because you have not owned and declared that Notion as your Judgment, but on the contrary. All of you that I have ever conversed with, have declared it to be understood of Baptism with Water, by the direction of the Spirit: if so, then it follows, that Men and Women are declared Members of Christ's Body by Baptism, and cannot be by Scripture reputed and esteemed so without it; which further appears from *Rom.* 6. 5. where Men by Baptism are said to be planted into the likeness of his Death; and *Col.* 2. 12. we are said to be buried with him by Baptism: all which, together with the consent of all Christians, (some few in these late times excepted) do prove that Baptism is necessary to the initiating Persons into the Church of Christ.

Thirdly, Holiness of Life is essential to Church-Communion, because it seems to be the reason why Christ founded a Church in the World, *viz.* that Men might thereby be watched over, and kept from falling; and that if any be overtaken with a Fault, he that is Spiritual might restore him: That by this means Men and Women might be preserv'd without blame to the coming of Christ. And the *Grace of God teacheth us*

to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly and uprightly in this present evil World, Tit. 2. 11, 12. *And let every one that names the Name of the Lord, depart from Iniquity*, 2 Tim. 2. 19. And *James* tells us, (speaking of the Christian Religion) *That pure Religion and undefiled before God, is to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep our selves unspotted from the World*, James 1. 27. From all which (together with many more Texts that might be produced) it appears, that an unholy and profane Life, is inconsistent with Christian Religion and Society; and that Holiness is essential to Salvation and Church-Communion: so that these three things, Faith, Baptism and a Holy Life, as I said before, all Churches must agree and unite in, as those things, which when wanting, will destroy their Being. And let not any think, that when I say, believing the Son of God died for the Sins of Men, is essential to Salvation and Church-Communion, that I hereby would exclude all other Articles of the Christian Creed, as not necessary, as the belief of the Resurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment, &c. which for want of time I omit to speak particularly to, and the rather, because I

understand this great Article of believing the Son of God died for the Sins of Men, is comprehensive of all others, and is that from whence all other Articles may easily be inferred.

And here I would not be mistaken, as tho I held there were nothing else for Christians to practise, when I say this is all that is requisite to Church-Communion; for I very well know that Christ requires many other things of us, after we are Members of his Body, which if we knowingly or maliciously refuse, may be the cause, not only of Excommunication, but Damnation: But yet these are such things as relate to the Well-being, and not to the Being of Churches; as laying on of Hands in the Primitive Times upon Believers, by which they did receive the Gifts of the Spirit; this (I say) was for the encrease and edifying of the Body, and not that thereby they might become of the Body of Christ, for that they were before. And do not think that I believe laying on of Hands was no Apostolical Institution, because I say Men are thereby made Members of Christ's Body, or because I say that it is not essential to Church-Communion: Why should I be thought to be against a Fire in the Chimney, because I say it must not be

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in the Thatch of the House? Consider then how pernicious a thing it is to make every Doctrine (tho true) the bound of Communion; this is that which destroys Unity, and by this Rule all Men must be perfect before they can be in Peace. For do we not see daily that as soon as Men come to a clearer understanding the Mind of God (to say the best of what they hold) that presently all Men are Excommunicable, if not Damnable, that do not agree with them? Do not some believe and see that to be Pride and Covetousness, which others do not, because (it may be) they have more narrowly and diligently searched into their Duty of these things than others have? What then, must all Men that have not so large acquaintance of their Duty herein, be excomunicated? Indeed it were to be wished that more Moderation in Apparel and Secular Governments were found among Churches; but God forbid, that if they should come short herein, that we should say, as one lately said, That he could not communicate with such a People, because they were proud and superfluous in their Apparel.

Let me appeal to such, and demand of them if there was not a time since they believed and were baptized, wherein they did

not believe laying on of Hands a Duty? and did they not then believe, and do they not ſtill believe they were Members of the Body of Chriſt? And was not there a time when you did not ſo well underſtand the nature and extent of Pride and Covetouſneſs as now you do? And did you not then believe, and do you not ſtill believe that you were true Members of Chriſt, tho leſs perfect? Why then ſhould you not judg of thoſe that differ from you herein, as you judged of your ſelves when you were as they now are? How needful then is it for Chriſtians to diſtinguiſh (if ever they would be at *Peace* and *Unity*) between thoſe Truths which are eſſential to Church-Communion, and thoſe that are not?

Fourthly, *Unity* and *Peace* conſiſt in our making one Shoulder, to practiſe and put in execution the things we do know: *Phil.* 3. 16. *Nevertheleſs wherein we have attained, let us walk by the ſame Rule, let us mind the ſame things.* How ſad is it to ſee our Zeal conſume us, and our precious Time, in things doubtful and diſputable, while we are not concerned, nor affected with the practice of thoſe indiſputable things we all agree in? We all know Charity to be the great Command, and yet how few agree to

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practise it? We all know they that labour in the Word and Doctrine, are worthy of double Honour; and that God hath ordained that they which preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel: these Duties, however others have cavil'd at them, I know you agree in them, and are perswaded of your Duty herein; but where's your Zeal to practise? O how well would it be with Churches, if they were but half as zealous for the great and plain, and indisputable Things, and the more chargeable and costly Things of Religion, as they are for Things doubtful or less necessary, or that are no charge to them, and cost nothing but the Breath of Contention, tho that may be too great a Price for the small things they purchase with it?

But further; Do we not all agree, that Men that preach the Gospel, should do it like Workmen that need not be ashamed? and yet how little is this considered by many Preachers, who never consider before they speak, of what they say, or whereof they affirm? How few give themselves to study, that they may be approved? How few meditate and give themselves to these things, that their profiting may appear to all?

For the Lord's ſake let us unite to practiſe thoſe things we know; and if we would have more Talents, let us all agree to improve thoſe we have.

See the Spirit that was among the Primitive Profeſſors, that knowing and believing how much it concerned them in the propagating of Chriſtianity, to ſhew forth Love to one another (that ſo all might know them to be Chriſt's Diſciples) rather than there ſhould be any complainings among them, they ſold all they had: O how zealous were theſe to practiſe, and with one Shoulder to do what was upon their Hearts for God! I might further add, how often have we agreed in our Judgment; and hath it not been upon our Hearts, that this and the other thing is good to be done, to enlighten the dark World, and to repair the Breaches of Churches, and to raiſe up thoſe Churches that now lie a gaſping, and among whom the Soul of Religion is expiring? But what do we more than talk of them? Do not moſt decline theſe things, when they either call for their Purſes, or their Perſons, to help in this and ſuch-like Works as theſe? Let us then, in what we know, unite, that we may put it in Practice, remembring, that

hat if we know these things, we shall be happy if we do them.

Fifthly, This Unity and Peace consist in our joining and agreeing to pray for, and to press after those Truths we do not know. The Disciples in the Primitive Times were conscious of their Imperfections, and therefore with one accord continued in Prayer and Supplications. If we were more in the sense of our own Ignorances and Imperfections, we should carry it better towards those that differ from us; then we should abound more in the Spirit of Meekness and Forbearance, that thereby we might bring others (or be brought by others) to the knowledg of the Truth: this would make us go to God, and say with *Elihu*, Job. 34. 32. *That which we know not, teach thou us.* Brethren, did we but all agree that we erred in many things, we should soon agree to go to God, and pray for more Wisdom and Revelation of his Mind and Will concerning us.

But here's our Misery, that we no sooner receive any thing for Truth, but we presently ascend the Chair of Infallibility with it, as tho in this we could not err: Hence it is we are impatient of Contradiction, and become

come uncharitable to those that are not of the same Mind; but now a Consciousness that we may mistake, or that if my Brother err in one thing, I may err in another, will unite us in Affection, and engage us to press after Perfection, according to that of the Apostle, *Phil.* 3. 13, 14, 15. *Brethren, I count not my self to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press towards the Mark, for the prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus. And if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.* O then that we could but unite and agree to go to God for one another, in confidence that he will teach us; and that if any of us want Wisdom (as who of us does not?) we might ask of God, who gives to all Men liberally, and upbraids no Man. Let us, like those People spoken of in *Isa.* 2. say one to another, Come, let us go to the Lord, for *he will teach us of his Ways, and we will walk in his Paths.*

Sixthly, This Unity and Peace mainly consists in Unity of Love and Affection; this is the great and indispensable Duty of all Christians, by this they are declared Christ's Disci-

Diſciples: And hence it is that Love is called the Great Commandment, the Old Commandment, and the New Commandment; that which was commanded in the beginning, and will remain unto the end, yea and after the end: 1 *Cor.* 13. 8. *Charity never fails; but whether there be Tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; or whether there be Knowledg, it ſhall vaniſh away.* And *v.* 13. *And now abideth Faith, Hope and Charity; but the greateſt of theſe is Charity.* And *Col.* 3. 14. *Above all theſe things, put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectneſs.* Becauſe *Charity is the end of the Commandment*, 1 Tim. 1. 5. Charity therefore is called *the Royal Law*; and has a ſuperintendency over other Laws, and doubtleſs is a Law to which others muſt give place, when they come in competition with it; *Above all things therefore have fervent Charity among your ſelves, for Charity covereth a multitude of Sins*, 1 Pet. 4. 8. Let us therefore live in Unity and Peace, and the God of Love and Peace will be with us.

That you may ſo do, let me remember you (in the words of a learned Man) that the Unity of the Church, is an Unity of Love and Affection; and not a bare

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Uniformity of Practice and Opinion.

Thirdly, Having ſhewn wherein this Unity conſiſts, I come to the third General Thing propounded, and that is, to ſhew the Fruits and Benefits of Unity and Peace; together with the Miſchiefs and Inconveniences attending thoſe Churches where Unity and Peace are wanting.

1*ſt*. Unity and Peace is a Duty well-pleaſing to God, who is ſtiled the Author of Peace, and not of Confuſion, in all the Churches: God's Spirit rejoices in the Unity of our Spirits. But on the other hand, where Strife and Diviſions are, there the Spirit of God is grieved. Hence it is that the Apoſtle no ſooner forbids the *Epheſians* to grieve the Spirit of God, but he preſently ſubjoins us a Remedy againſt that Evil, *That they put away bitterneſs and evil-ſpeaking; and be kind one to another, and tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven them*, Eph. 4. 30, 32.

2*ly*. As Unity and Peace are pleaſing to God, and rejoice his Spirit, ſo they rejoice the Hearts and Spirits of God's People. Unity and Peace bring Heaven down upon Earth

Earth among us. Hence it is the Apostle tells us, *Rom.* 4. 17. That *the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* Where Unity and Peace are, there is Heaven upon Earth: by this we taste the first Fruits of that blessed Estate we shall one day live in the fruition of; when we shall come *to the general Assembly and Church of the First-born, whose Names are written in Heaven, and to God the Judg of all, and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect,* Heb. 12. 23.

This outward Peace of the Church (as a learned Man observes) *distils into Peace of Conscience, and turns Writings and Readings of Controversy, into Treatises of Mortification and Devotion.*

And the Psalmist tells us, it is not only good, but pleasant, for Brethren to dwell together in Unity, *Psal.* 133. 1. But where Unity and Peace are wanting, there are Storms and Troubles: *Where Envy and Strife is, there is Confusion and every evil Work,* Jam. 3. 16. It is the outward Peace of the Church that increases our inward Joy; and the Peace of God's House gives us occasion to eat our Meat with gladness in our own Houses, *Act.* 2. 46.

3dly. The Unity and Peace of the Church make Communion of Saints desirable. What is it that imbitters Church-Communion, and makes it burdensom, but Divisions? Have you not heard many complain that they are weary of Church-Communion, because of Church-Contention? but now where Unity and Peace is, there Christians long for Communion.

David saith, that he was glad when they said unto him, *Let us go to the House of God*, *Psal.* 122. 1. Why was this, but because (as the third Verse tells us) *Jerusalem was a City compact together, where the Tribes went up, the Tribes of the Lord, to give thanks to his Name?* And *David* speaking of the Man that was once his Friend, thereby lets us know the Benefit of Peace and Unity, *Psal.* 55. 14. *We*, saith he, *took sweet Counsel together, and walked to the House of God in Company.* Where Unity is strongest, Communion is sweetest and most desirable. You see then that Peace and Union fill the People of God with desires after Communion: But on the other hand, hear how *David* complains, *Psal.* 120. *Wo is me, I sojourn in* Mesech, *and that I dwell in the Tents of* Kedar.

Kedar. The Pſalmiſt here is thought to allude to a ſort of Men that dwelt in the Deſarts of *Arabia*, that got their Livings by Contention; and therefore he adds, *ver.* 6. *That his Soul had long dwelt with them that hated Peace.* This was that which made him long for the Courts of God, and eſteem one Day in his Houſe better than a thouſand elſewhere; this made his Soul even faint for the Houſe of God, becauſe of the Peace of it; *Bleſſed are they* (ſaith he) *that dwell in thy Houſe, they will be ſtill praiſing thee.* There is a certain note of Concord, as appears, *Act.* 2. where we read of Primitive Chriſtians, meeting with *one accord, praiſing God.*

4*thly.* Where Unity and Peace are, there many Miſchiefs and Inconveniences are prevented, which attend thoſe People where Peace and Unity are wanting: And of thoſe many that might be mentioned, I ſhall briefly inſiſt upon theſe Nine.

1. Where Unity and Peace are wanting, there is much precious Time ſpent to no purpoſe; how many Days are ſpent, and how many fruitleſs Journies made to no profit, where the People are not in peace? How often have many redeemed Time (even in Seed-time and Harveſt) when they could

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ſcarce afford it, to go to Church, and, by reaſon of their Diviſions, come home worſe than they went, repenting they have ſpent ſo much precious Time to ſo little Benefit? How ſad is it to ſee Men ſpend their precious Time, in which they ſhould work out their Salvation, by labouring, as in the Fire, to prove an uncertain and doubtful Propoſition; and to crifle away their Time, in which they ſhould make their Calling and Election ſure, to make ſure of an Opinion, which when they have done all, are not infallibly certain whether it be true or no, becauſe all things neceſſary to Salvation and Church-Communion are plainly laid down in Scripture, in which we may be infallibly ſure of the Truth of them? But for other things that we have no plain Texts for, but the Truth of them depends upon our Interpretations, we muſt be cautioned, that we do not ſpend much time in impoſing them upon, or venting among others, unleſs we can aſſume Infallibility; otherwiſe we ſpend Time upon Uncertainty. And whoever caſt their Eyes abroad, and open their Ears to Intelligence, ſhall both ſee, and to their ſorrow hear, that many Churches ſpend moſt of their time in jangling and contending about thoſe things, which are

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neither essential to Salvation or Church-Communion; and, which is worse, about such doubtful Questions that they are never able to give an infallible Solution of. But now where Unity and Peace are, our Time is spent in praising God; and in those great Questions, What we should do to be saved? and how we may be more holy, and more humble towards God, and more charitable and more serviceable to one another?

2. Where Unity and Peace are wanting, there is evil-surmizing, and evil-speaking, to the Damage and Disgrace, if not to the Ruining of one another: Gal. 5. 14, 15. *The whole Law is fulfilled in one word, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self: but if ye bite and devour one another, take heed ye be not consumed one of another.* No sooner is the Bond of Charity broken, which is as a Wall about Christians, but soon they begin to make Havock and Spoil of one another; then there is raising evil Reports, and taking up evil Reports against each other: Hence it is that whispering and backbiting proceeds, and going from House to House to blazon the Faults and Infirmities of others; hence it is that we watch for the Haltings of one another, and do inwardly rejoice at the Miscarriages of others; saying, in our Hearts,

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Ah, ah, so we would have it, But now where Unity and Peace are, there is Charity; and where Charity is, we are willing to hide the Faults, and cover the Nakedness of our Brethren. *Charity thinketh no evil*, 1 Cor. 13.5. And therefore it cannot surmize, neither will it speak evil.

3. Where Unity and Peace are wanting, there can be no great Matters enterprized, we cannot do much for God, nor much for one another. When the Devil would hinder the bringing to pass of Good in Nations and Churches, he divides their Counsels, and (as one well observes) he divides their Heads, that he may divide their Hands. When *Jacob* had propheſied of the Cruelty of *Simeon* and *Levi*, who were Brethren, he threatens them with the Conſequent of it; Gen. 49. 7. *I will divide them in* Jacob, *and ſcatter them in* Iſrael. The Devil is not to learn that Maxim he hath taught the Machiavelians of the World, *divide & impera*, divide and rule; it is a united Force that's formidable: Hence the Spouſe in the *Canticles* is ſaid to be but one, and the only one of her Mother, *Cant. 6. 9.* Hereupon it is ſaid of her, *ver.* 10. That ſhe is *terrible as an Army with Banners.* What can a divided Army do, or a diſordered Army, that have

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loſt their Banners, or for fear or ſhame thrown them away? In like manner, what can Chriſtians do for Chriſt, and the enlarging his Dominions in the World, in bringing Men from Darkneſs to Light, while themſelves are divided and diſordered? Peace is to Chriſtians, as great Rivers are to ſome Cities, which (beſides other Benefits and Commodities) are natural Fortifications, by reaſon whereof thoſe Places are made impregnable; but when, by the Subtlety of an Adverſary, or the Folly of the Citizens, theſe Waters come to be divided into little petty Rivulets, how ſoon are they aſſailed and taken? Thus it fares with Churches, when once the Devil, or their own Folly divides them, they will be ſo far from reſiſting of him, that they will be ſoon ſubjected by him.

Peace is to Churches as Walls to Cities; nay, Unity hath defended Cities that had no Walls: It was once demanded of *Ageſilaus*, why *Lacedemon* had no Walls? He anſwers, (pointing back to the City) *That the Concord of the Citizens was the Strength of the City.* In like manner, Chriſtians are ſtrong when united; then they are more capable to reſiſt Temptation, and to ſuccour ſuch as are tempted; when Unity and Peace is among

the Churches, then are they like a Walled Town: And when Peace is the Churches Wall, Salvation will be her Bulwarks.

Plutarch tells us of one *Silurus* that had 80 Sons, whom he calls to him as he lay on his Death-bed, and gave them a Sheaf of Arrows, thereby to signify, that if they lived in Unity, they might do much; but if they divided, they would come to nothing. If Christians were all of one piece, if they were all but one Lump, or but one Sheaf or Bundle, how great are the things they might do for Christ and his People in the World, whereas otherwise they can do little but dishonour and offend him.

It is reported of the *Leviathan*, that his Strength is in his Scales: *Job* 41. 15, 16, 17. *His Scales are his Pride, shut up together as with a close Seal; one is so near to another, that no Air can come between them; they join together, they stick together, they cannot be sundred.* If the Church of God were united like the Scales of *Leviathan*, it would not be every brain-sick Notion, nor angry Speculation, that would cause their Separation.

Solomon saith, *Two are better than one*, because if one fall, the other may raise him; then surely twenty are better than two, and

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an hundred are better than twenty, for the ſame reaſon, becauſe they are more capable to help one another. If ever Chriſtians would do any thing to raiſe up the fall'n Tabernacles of *Jacob*, and to ſtrengthen the weak, and comfort the feeble, and to fetch back thoſe that have gone aſtray, it muſt be by Unity.

We read of the Men of *Babel*, Gen. 11. 6. *The Lord ſaith, Behold, the People are one*, &c. *And now nothing will be reſtrained from them that they have imagined to do.*

We learn by Reaſon what great things may be done in worldly Atchievements where Unity is: And ſhall not Reaſon (aſſiſted with the Motives of Religion) teach us, that Unity among Chriſtians may enable them to enterprize greater Things for Chriſt? would not this make Satan fall from Heaven like Lightning? For as Unity built literal *Babel*, it's Unity that muſt pull down myſtical *Babel*. And on the other hand, where Diviſions are, there is Confuſion; by this means a *Babel* hath been built in every Age. It hath been obſerved by a Learned Man, and I wiſh I could not ſay truly, That there is moſt of *Babel* and Confuſion among thoſe that cry out moſt againſt it. If we would have a Hand to deſtroy *Babylon*, let's

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have a Heart to unite one among another.

Our Engliſh Hiſtories tell us, that after *Auſtin* the Monk had been ſome time in *England*, he heard of ſome of the Remains of the Britiſh Chriſtians, which he conven'd to a Place, which *Cambden* in his *Britannia* calls *Auſtin's Oak:* here they met to conſult about Matters of Religion; but ſuch was their Diviſion, by reaſon of *Auſtin's* impoſing Spirit, that our Stories tell us, *That Synod was famous for this, that they only met and did Nothing.* This is the miſchief of Diviſions, they hinder the doing of much Good; and if Chriſtians that are divided, be ever famous for any thing, it will be, that they have often met together, and talked of this and that thing, but did nothing.

4. Where Unity and Peace are wanting, there the Weak are wounded, and the Wicked are hardened: Unity may well be compared to *precious Oil*, Pſal. 133. 2. It's the nature of Oil to heal that which is wounded, and to ſoften that which is hard. Thoſe that have hardned themſelves againſt God and his People, when they ſhall behold Unity and Peace among them, will ſay, God is in them indeed. And on the other hand, are they not ready to ſay, when they ſee you divided, *That the Devil's in you that you cannot agree?*

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5. Diviſions, and want of Peace, keep thoſe out of the Church that would come in, and cauſe many to go out that are in.

'The Diviſions of Chriſtians (as a Learned Man obſerves) 'are a Scandal to the 'Jews, an *Opprobrium* to the Gentiles, and 'an Inlet to Atheiſm and Infidelity. Inſomuch that our Controverſies about Religion (eſpecially as they have been of late managed) have made Religion it ſelf become a Controverſy. O then, how good and pleaſant a thing is it for Brethren to dwell together in Unity! The Peace and Unity among the Primitive Chriſtians, drew others to them: What hinders the Converſion of the Jews, but the Diviſions of Chriſtians? Muſt I be a Chriſtian, ſays the Jew? What Chriſtian muſt I be? What Sect muſt I be of? The Jews (as one notes) gloſſing upon that Text in *Iſa.* 11. 6. where it is propheſied, *That the Lion and the Lamb ſhall lie down together, and that there ſhall be none left to hurt nor deſtroy in all God's Holy Mountain*; and interpreting theſe Sayings, to ſignify the Concord and Peace that ſhall be among the People that ſhall own the *Meſſiah*, do hence conclude, that the *Meſſiah* is not yet come, becauſe of the Contentions and Diviſions that are among thoſe that profeſs him. And

the Apoſtle ſaith, 1 *Cor.* 14. 23. That if an Unbeliever ſhould ſee their Diſorders, he would ſay they were mad; but where Unity and Peace are, there the Churches are multiplied. We read, *Acts* 9. that when the Churches had reſt, they multiplied; and *Acts* 2. 46, 47. when the Church was ſerving God with one accord, *the Lord added to them daily ſuch as ſhould be ſaved.*

It is Unity brings Men into the Church, and Diviſions keep them out. It is reported of an Indian paſſing by the Houſe of a Chriſtian, and hearing them contending, being deſired to turn in, he refuſed, ſaying, *Habamack* dwells there, meaning that the Devil dwelt there: but where Unity and Peace are, there God is; and he that dwells in Love, dwells in God. The Apoſtle tells the *Corinthians*, That if they walked orderly, even the Unbeliever would hereby be enforced to come and worſhip, and ſay, God was in them indeed. And we read, *Zech.* 8. 23. of a Time when ten Men ſhall take hold of a Jew, and ſay, *We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.*

And hence it is that Chriſt prays, *John* 17. 21. *That his Diſciples might be one, as the Father and he were one, that the World might believe the Father ſent him:* As if he

ſhould

ſhould ſay, you may preach me as long as you will, and to little purpoſe, if you are not at Peace and Unity among your ſelves. Such was the Unity of Chriſtians in former days, that the intelligent Heathen would ſay of them, That tho they had many Bodies, yet they had but one Soul. And we read the ſame of them, *Acts* 4. 32. *That the multitude of them that believed, were of one Heart and one Soul.*

And as the Learned *Stillingfleet* obſerves in his *Irenicum*, 'The Unity and Peace that 'was then among Chriſtians, made Religion 'amiable in the Judgment of impartial Hea-'thens: Chriſtians were then known by the 'benignity and ſweetneſs of their Diſpoſiti-'ons, by the candor and ingenuity of their 'Spirits, by their mutual Love, Forbearance, 'and Condeſcenſion to one another. But 'either this is not the Practice of Chriſtiani-'ty, (*viz. a Duty Chriſtians are now bound to obſerve*) 'or elſe it is not calculated for our 'Meridian, where the Spirits of Men are of 'too high an elevation for it: for if Pride 'and Uncharitableneſs, Diviſions and Strife, 'Wrath and Envy, Animoſities and Con-'tentions, were but the Marks of true Chri-'ſtians, *Diogenes* need never light his Lamp 'at Noon to find out ſuch among us; but if

'a Spirit of Meekneſs, Gentleneſs and Con-
'deſcenſion, a ſtooping to the Weakneſſes
'and Infirmities of one another, a purſuit
'after Peace, when it flies from us, be the
'indiſpenſable Duties, and characteriſtical
'Notes of Chriſtians, it may poſſibly prove
'a difficult Inqueſt to find out ſuch, for the
'crouds of thoſe that ſhelter themſelves un-
'der that glorious Name.

It is the Unity and Peace of Churches that bring others to them, and make Chriſtianity amiable. What is propheſied of the Church of the Jews, may in this caſe be applied to the Gentile Church, *Iſa.* 66. 12. That when once God extends Peace to her like a River, the Gentiles ſhall come in like a flowing Stream; then (and not till then) the Glory of the Lord ſhall ariſe upon his Churches, and his Glory ſhall be ſeen among them; then ſhall their Hearts fear and be enlarged, becauſe the abundance of the Nations ſhall be converted to them.

6. As want of Unity and Peace keeps thoſe out of the Church that would come in, ſo it hinders the growth of thoſe that are in. Jars and Diviſions, Wranglings and Prejudices, eat out the Growth, if not the Life of Religion. Theſe are thoſe Waters of *Marah*, that imbitter our Spirits, and

and quench the Spirit of God. Unity and Peace are ſaid to be like the Dew of *Hermon*, and as a Dew that deſcended upon *Sion*, where the Lord commanded his Bleſſing, *Pſal.* 133. 3.

Diviſions run Religion into Briars and Thorns, Contentions and Parties. Diviſions are to Churches, like Wars in Countries: Where War is, the Ground lieth waſte and untilled, none takes care of it. It is Love that edifieth, but Diviſion pulleth down: Diviſions are as the North-eaſt Wind to the Fruits, which cauſes them to dwindle away to nothing; but when the Storms are over, every thing begins to grow. When Men are divided, they ſeldom ſpeak the Truth in Love; and then no marvel they grow not up to him in all things, which is the Head.

It is a ſad preſage of an approaching Famine, (as one well obſerves) not of Bread nor Water, but of hearing the Word of God, when the thin Ears of Corn devour the plump full Ones; when the lean Kine devour the fat Ones; when our Controverſies about doubtful things, and things of leſs moment, eat up our Zeal for the more indiſputable and practical things in Religion: which may give us cauſe to fear, that this will be the Character by which our Age

will be known to Posterity, that it was the Age that talked of Religion most, and loved it least.

Look upon those Churches where Peace is, and there you shall find Prosperity: When the Churches had rest, they were not only multiplied, but walking in the Fear of the Lord, and the Comforts of the Holy Ghost, they were edified; it is when the whole Body is knit together, as with Joints and Bands, that they increase with the Increase of God.

We are at a stand sometimes, why there is so little Growth among Churches, why Men have been so long in learning, and are yet so far from attaining the knowledg of the Truth: some have given one Reason, and some another; some say Pride is the Cause, and others say Covetousness is the Cause; I wish I could say these were no Causes: but I observe, that when God entred his Controversy with his People of old, he mainly insisted upon some one Sin, as Idolatry, and shedding innocent Blood, &c. as comprehensive of the rest; not but that they were guilty of other Sins, but those that were the most capital, are particularly insisted on. In like manner, whoever would but take a review of Churches that live in Con-

Contentions and Diviſions, may eaſily find that breach of Unity and Charity is their capital Sin, and the occaſion of all other Sins. No marvel then, that the Scripture ſaith, the whole Law is fulfilled in Love; and if ſo, then where Love is wanting, it follows, the whole Law is broken. It is where Love grows cold, that Sin abounds; and therefore the want of Unity and Peace is the cauſe of that Leanneſs and Barrenneſs that is among us: it's true in Spirituals as well as Temporals, that Peace brings Plenty.

7. Where Unity and Peace are wanting, our Prayers are hindred: The Promiſe is, that what we ſhall agree to ask, ſhall be given us of our Heavenly Father. No marvel we pray and pray, and yet are not anſwered; it is becauſe we are not agreed what to have.

It's reported, that the People in *Lacedemonia*, coming to make Supplications to their Idol God, ſome of them asked for Rain, and others of them asked for fair Weather: The Oracle returns them this Anſwer, That they ſhould go firſt and agree among themſelves. Would a Heathen God refuſe to anſwer ſuch Prayers, in which the Supplicants were not agreed; and ſhall we

think the true God will answer them?

We see then that Divisions hinder our Prayers, and lay a Prohibition on our Sacrifice: If *thou bring thy Gift to the Altar*, (saith Christ) *and there remember that thy Brother hath ought against thee, leave thy Gift, and go and first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer it.* So that want of Unity and Charity hinders even our particular Prayers and Devotions.

This hindred the Prayers and Fastings of the People of old from finding acceptance, *Isa.* 58.3. The People ask the Reason wherefore they fasted, and God did not see nor take notice of them? He gives this Reason, because they fasted for Strife and Debate, and hid their Face from their own Flesh. Again, *Isa.* 59. the Lord saith, *His Hand was not shortned, that he could not save; nor his Ear heavy, that he could not hear: but their Sins had separated between their God and them.* And among those many Sins they stood chargeable with, this was none of the least, *viz.* that *the way of Peace they had not known.* You see where Peace was wanting, Prayers were hindred, both under the Old and New Testament.

The Sacrifice of the People, in *Isa.* 65. that said, *Stand further off, I am holier than thou,*

thou, was a ſmoke in the Noſtrils of the Lord. On the other hand, we read how acceptable thoſe Prayers were that were made with one accord, *Acts* 4. 24. with 31. they prayed with one accord, and they were all of one Heart, and of one Soul; and ſee the Benefit of it, *they were all filled with the Holy Ghoſt, and ſpoke the Word with all boldneſs:* Which was the very thing they prayed for, as appears, *v.* 29. And the Apoſtle exhorts the Husband to dwell with his Wife, that their *Prayers* might not be hindred, 1 *Pet.* 3. 7. We ſee then, want of Unity and Peace either in Families or Churches, is an hindrance of Prayers.

8. It is a Diſhonour and Diſparagement to Chriſt, that his Family ſhould be divided. When an Army falls into Mutiny and Diviſion, it reflects Diſparagement on him that has the Conduct of it: In like manner the Diviſions of Families are a Diſhonour to the Heads, and thoſe that govern them. And if ſo, then how greatly do we diſhonour our Lord and Governour, who gave his Body to be broken, to keep his Church from breaking, who prayed for their Peace and Unity, and left Peace at his departing from them for a Legacy, even a Peace which the World could not beſtow upon them?

9. Where there are Peace and Unity, there is a Sympathy with each other; that which is the want of one, will be the want of all: Who is afflicted, (ſays the Apoſtle) and I burn not? We ſhould then *remember them that are in Bonds, as bound with them; and them which ſuffer Adverſity, as being our ſelves alſo of the Body*, Heb. 13. 3. But where the Body is broken, or Men are not reckoned or eſteemed of the Body, no marvel we are ſo little affected with ſuch as are afflicted: Where Diviſions are, that which is the Joy of the one, is the Grief of another; but where Unity, Peace and Charity abound, there we ſhall find Chriſtians mourning with them that mourn, and rejoicing with them that rejoice; then they will not envy the Proſperity of others, nor ſecretly rejoice at the Miſeries or Miſcarriages of any.

Laſtly, I ſhall give 14 Directions and Motives for obtaining Peace and Unity.

1. If we would live in Peace and Unity, we muſt pray for them. We are required to *ſeek Peace*: Of whom then can we ſeek it with hopes to find it, but of him who is a God of *Peace*, and has promiſed to bleſs his People with it? God has promiſed to give his People one Heart, and one Way; yet for

for all theſe things, he will be ſought unto.

The Peace of Churches is what the Apoſtle prays for in all his Epiſtles; in which his deſire is, that *Grace* and *Peace* may be multiplied and increaſed among them.

2. They that would endeavour the Peace of the Churches, muſt be careful who they commit the care and overſight of the Churches to; as, firſt (over and beſides thoſe Qualifications that ſhould be in all Chriſtians) they that rule the Church of God, ſhould be Men of Counſel and Underſtanding. Where an ignorant Miniſtry is, commonly is an ignorant People, according as it was of old, *Like Prieſt, like People.*

How ſad is it to ſee the Church of God committed to the care of ſuch that pretend to be Teachers of others, yet underſtand not what they ſay, or whereof they affirm. No marvel the Peace of Churches is broken, when their Watchmen want Skill to preſerve their Unity, which of all Things is as the Church's Wall; when they are divided, no wonder they crumble to Atoms, if there is no skilful Phyſician to heal them. It's ſad when there is no Balm in *Gilead*, and when there is no Phyſician there. Hence it is, that the Wounds of Churches become incurable,

like

like the Wounds of God's People of old, either not healed at all, or else but slightly, and to no purpose. May it not be said of many Churches at this day, as God said of the Church of *Israel*, That *he sought for a Man among them that should stand in the Gap, and make up the Breach, but he found none?*

Remember what was said of old, *Mal.* 2. 7. *The Priest's Lips should preserve Knowledg; and the People should seek the Law at his Mouth:* But when this is wanting, the People will stumble, and depart from God and one another. Therefore God complains, *Hos.* 4. 6. That *his People were destroyed for want of Knowledg*; that is, for want of knowing Guides: for if the Light in them that teach, be Darkness, how great is that Darkness? And if the Blind lead the Blind, no marvel both fall into the Ditch.

How many be there that take upon them to teach others, that had need be taught the beginning of Religion; that instead of multiplying Knowledg, multiply Words without Knowledg; and instead of making known God's Counsel, darken Counsel by Words without Knowledg? Some do more than darken Counsel, for they wrest the Counsel of God; 2 Pet. 3. 16. *In* Paul's *Epistles are some things hard to be understood,*

which

which they that are unlearned and unſtable wreſt, as they do alſo the other Scriptures, to their own deſtruction. Some things in Scripture are hard to be known, and they are made harder by ſuch unlearned Teachers, as utter their own Notions by Words without Knowledg.

None are more bold to take upon them to expound the dark Myſteries and Sayings of the Prophets and Revelations, and the 9*th* of the *Romans*, which I believe contains ſome of thoſe many things which in *Paul's* Epiſtles, *Peter* ſaith, *were hard to be underſtood:* I ſay, none are more forward to dig in theſe Mines, than thoſe that can hardly give a ſound Reaſon for the firſt Principles of Religion; and ſuch as are ignorant of many more weighty things, that are eaſily to be ſeen in the Face and Superficies of the Scripture. Nothing will ſerve theſe but ſwimming in the Deeps, when they have not yet learned to wade thrô the Shallows of the Scriptures. Like the Gnoſticks of old, who thought they knew all Things, tho they knew nothing as they ought. And as thoſe Gnoſticks did of old, ſo do ſuch Teachers of late break the Unity and Peace of Churches. How needful then is it, that if we deſire the Peace of Churches, we chuſe

out.

out Men of Knowledg, who may be able to keep them from being ſhattered and ſcattered with every Wind of Doctrine; and who may be able to convince and ſtop the Mouths of Gain-ſayers?

3. You muſt not only chuſe Men of Counſel; but (if you deſign the Unity and Peace of the Churches) Men of Courage to govern them: for as there muſt be Wiſdom to bear with ſome, ſo there muſt be Courage to correct others; as ſome muſt be inſtructed meekly, ſo others rebuked ſharply, that they may be ſound in the Faith; there muſt be Wiſdom to rebuke ſome with long-ſuffering, and Courage to ſuppreſs and ſtop the Mouths of others. The Apoſtle tells *Titus* of ſome whoſe Mouths muſt he ſtop'd, or elſe they would ſubvert whole Houſes, *Tit.* 1, 11. Where this Courage has been wanting, not only whole Houſes, but whole Churches have been ſubverted. And *Paul* tells the *Galatians*, That *when he ſaw ſome endeavour to bring the Churches into Bondage, that he did not give place to them, no not for an hour*, &c. *Gal.* 2. 5. If this Courſe had been taken by the Rulers of Churches, their Peace had not been ſo often invaded by unruly and vain Talkers.

4. In chuſing Men to rule (if you would

endea-

endeavour to keep the Unity of the Spirit, and the Bond of Peace thereby) be careful you chuſe Men of peaceable Diſpoſitions. That which has much annoyed the Peace of Churches, has been the froward and perverſe Spirits of the Rulers thereof: *Solomon* therefore adviſes, That *with a furious Man we ſhould not go, leſt we learn his Ways, and get a Snare to our Souls*, Prov. 22. 24, 25. And with the Froward we learn Frowardneſs. How do ſome Mens Words eat like a Canker, who inſtead of lifting up their Voice like a Trumpet, to ſound a Parley for Peace, have rather ſounded an Alarm to War and Contention? If we would live in Peace, let's reverence their Feet that bring the gald Tidings of it. O how have ſome made it their Buſineſs to preach Contentions, and upon entertaining of every novel Opinion, to preach Separation! How has God's Word been ſtretched and torn, to furniſh theſe Men with Arguments to tear Churches! Have not our Ears heard theſe Texts, that ſay, *Come out from among them, and be ſeparate*, &c. and *withdraw from every Brother that walks diſorderly?* I ſay, have we not heard theſe Texts, that were written to prevent Diſorder, brought to countenance the greateſt Diſorder in the Church

of

of God, even Schiſm and Diviſion? whereas one of theſe Exhortations was written to the Church of *Corinth*, to ſeparate themſelves from the Idols Temple and Table, which many of them lived in the participation of, notwithſtanding their profeſſion of the true God; as appears 2 *Cor.* 6. 16, 17. compared with 1 *Cor.* 8. 7. 1 *Cor.* 10. 14, 20, 22. And not for ſome Members, who ſhall make themſelves both Judges and Parties, to ſeparate, when and as often as they pleaſe, from the whole Congregation and Church of God where they ſtood related; for by the ſame Rule, and on the ſame Ground, may others ſtart ſome new Queſtion among theſe new Separatiſts, and become Judges of the Communicableneſs of them, and thereupon make another Separation from theſe, till at laſt two be not left to walk together. And for that other Text, mentioned 2 *Theſſ.* 3. 9. where *Paul* exhorts the Church of *Theſſalonica* to *withdraw themſelves from every Brother that walks diſorderly*; I wonder that any ſhould bring it to juſtify their Separation, or withdrawing from the Communion of a true (tho a diſorderly) Church. For, (1.) Conſider, that this was not writ for a few Members to withdraw from the Church, but for the Church.

Church to withdraw from diſorderly Members. (2.) Conſider, that if any offended Members, on pretence of Error, either in Doctrine or Practice, ſhould by this Text become Judges (as well as Parties) of the Grounds and Lawfulneſs of their Separation; then it will follow, that half a ſcore notorious Hereticks, or ſcandalous Livers (when they have walked ſo as they foreſee the Church are ready to deal with, and withdraw from them) ſhall anticipate the Church, and pretend ſomewhat againſt it, of which themſelves muſt be Judges, and ſo withdraw from it, pretending either Hereſie or Diſorder; and then condemn the Church, to prevent the diſgrace of being condemned by it. How needful then is it, that Men of peaceable Diſpoſitions, and not of factious and dividing Spirits, be choſe to rule the Church of God, leſt it be leavened and ſowred by them?

5. As there muſt be care uſed in chuſing Men to rule the Church, ſo we muſt conſider that there are many things darkly laid down in Scripture: this will temper our Spirits, and make us live in Peace and Unity the more firmly in things wherein we agree; this will help us to bear one another's Burden, and ſo fulfil the Law of Chriſt, inaſmuch

inaſmuch as all things neceſſary to Salvation and Church-Communion are plain in Scripture. And where things are more darkly laid down, we ſhould conſider that God intended hereby to ſtir up our diligence, that we might increaſe our Knowledg, and not our Diviſions: for it may be ſaid of all Diſcoveries of Truth we have made in the Scriptures, as it's ſaid of the Globe of the Earth, that tho Men have made great Searches, and thereupon great Diſcoveries, yet there is ſtill a *Terra incognita*, an unknown Land; ſo there is in the Scriptures; for after Men have travelled over them, one Age after another, yet ſtill there is a *Terra incognita*, an unknown Tract, to put us upon farther ſearch and enquiry, and keep us from cenſuring and falling out with thoſe who have not yet made the ſame Diſcoveries: ſo that we may ſay with *David*, when we reflect on our ſhort apprehenſions of the Mind of God, *We have ſeen an end of all Perfections, but God's Commands are exceeding broad*; and (as one obſerves, ſpeaking of the Scriptures) that there is a Path in them leading to the Mind of God, that lies far from the Thoughts and Apprehenſions of Men. And on the other hand, in many other places, God ſits, as it were, on the Superficies, and the Face of the

the Letter, where he that runs may discern him speaking plainly, and no Parable at all. How should the consideration of this induce us to a peaceable deportment towards those that differ?

6. If we would endeavour Peace and Unity, we must consider how God has tempered the Body; that so the comely Parts should not separate from the uncomely, as having no need of them; 1 *Cor.* 12. 22—25. There are in Christ's Body and House, some Members and Vessels less honourable, 2 *Tim.* 2. 20. And therefore we should not, as some now a-days, pour the more abundant Disgrace, instead of putting the more abundant Honour upon them: Did we but consider this, we should be covering the Weakness, and hiding the Miscarriages of one another, because we are all Members of one another, and the most useless Member in its place is useful.

7. If we would live in Peace, let us remember our Relations to God, as Children to a Father, and to each other as Brethren. Will not the Thoughts that we have one Father, quiet us, and the Thoughts that we are Brethren, unite us? It was this made *Abraham* propose Terms of Peace to *Lot*, Gen. 13. *Let there be no Strife between us, for we are Bre-*

Brethren. And we read of *Moſes* (*Acts* 7. 26.) uſing this Argument, to reconcile thoſe that ſtrove together, and to ſet them at one again; *Sirs, ye are Brethren, why do ye wrong one another?* A deep ſenſe of this, that we are Brethren, would keep us from dividing.

8. If we would preſerve Peace, let us mind the Gifts, Graces, and Vertues that are in each other; let theſe be more in our Eye than their Failings and Imperfections. When the Apoſtle exhorted the *Philippians* to Peace, as a means hereunto, that ſo the Peace of God might rule in their Hearts, he tells them, *Chap.* 4. 8. that *if there were any Vertue, or any Praiſe, they ſhould think of theſe things.* While we are always expoſing the Faults of one another, and ſpreading their Infirmities, no marvel we are ſo little in Peace and Charity: for as Charity covers a multitude of Sins, ſo Malice covers a multitude of Vertues, and makes us deal by one another, as the Heathen Perſecutors dealt with Chriſtians, *viz.* put them in Bear-skins, that they might more eaſily become a Prey to the Dogs deſigned to devour them.

9. If we would keep Unity and Peace, let us lay aſide provoking and dividing Language, and forgive thoſe that uſe it. Remember

member that old Saying, *Evil Words corrupt good Manners.* When Men think to carry all afore them, with ſpeaking uncharitably and diſgracefully of their Brethren, or their Opinions; may not ſuch be anſwered, as *Job* anſwered his unfriendly Viſitants, *Ch.* 6. 25. *How forcible are right Words? but what do your Arguings reprove?* How healing are words fitly ſpoken? *A word in ſeaſon, how good is it?* If we would ſeek Peace, let us clothe all our Treaties for Peace with acceptable Words; and where one Word may better do than another, let that be uſed to expreſs Perſons or Things by; and let us not, as ſome do, call the different Practices of our Brethren, Will-worſhip, and their different Opinions, Doctrines of Devils, and the Doctrine of *Balaam*, who taught Fornication, *&c.* unleſs we can plainly and expreſly prove it ſo. Such Language as this has ſtrangely divided our Spirits, and hardned our Hearts one towards another.

10. If we would live in Peace, let us make the beſt conſtruction of one another's Words and Actions. Charity judges the beſt, and it thinks no evil. If Words and Actions may be well conſtrued, let us never put an ill conſtruction upon them: How much has the Peace of Chriſtians

ſtians been broken by uncharitable interpreting Words and Actions? As ſome lay to the charge of others, what they never ſaid; ſo by ſtraining Mens Words, others lay to their charge that they never thought.

11. Be willing to hear, and obey thoſe that God by his Providence has ſet over you; this is a great means to preſerve the Unity and Peace of Churches: but when Men (nay, ſometimes Women) ſhall uſurp Authority, and think themſelves wiſer than their Teachers, no wonder if they run into Contentions and Parties, and ſay, they are not free to hear thoſe whom the Church thinks fit to ſpeak to them. This is the firſt ſtep to Schiſm, and is often attended with a ſinful Separation.

12. If you would keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, be mindful, that the God whom you ſerve is a God of *Peace*, and your Saviour is a Prince of Peace; that his Ways are Pleaſantneſs, and all his Paths are Peace; that Chriſt was ſent to give Light to them that ſit in Darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of Death, and to guide our Feet in the Way of Peace.

13. Conſider the oneneſs of Spirit among the Enemies of Religion; tho they differ about other things, yet they will agree

to

to perſecute, and extirpate Religion out of the Earth: the Devils in the Air, in the Earth, in Hell, and in the World, do all make one at this turn. Shall the Devil's Kingdom be united, and Chriſt's be divided? Shall the Devils join to drive on the Deſign of damning Men, and Chriſtians not unite to carry on the great Deſign of ſaving of them? Shall the Papiſts agree to carry on their Intereſt, notwithſtanding the multitudes of Orders, Degrees and Differences among them? and ſhall not thoſe that call themſelves Reformed Churches, unite, to carry on the Common Intereſt of Chriſt in the World, notwithſtanding ſome petty and diſputable Differences among them? *Quarrels about Religion* (as one obſerves) *were Sins not named among the Gentiles.* What a ſhame is it then for Chriſtians to abound in them, eſpecially conſidering the nature of Chriſtian Religion, and what large Proviſions the Author of it has made to keep its Profeſſors in Peace? *Inſomuch that it is next to a Miracle, that ever any* (eſpecially the Profeſſors of it) *ſhould fall out about it.*

14. Conſider and remember, that the Judg ſtands at the Door; let this moderate our Spirits, that the Lord is at Hand. What a ſad Account will they have to make when he comes, that ſhall be found to ſmite their Fellow-Servants, and to make the way to his Kingdom narrower than ever he made it? Let me cloſe all in the words of St. *Paul*, 2 Cor. 13. 11. *Finally, Brethren, Farewel; be perfect, be of good Comfort, be of one Mind, live in Peace, and the God of Love and Peace ſhall be with you.*

POST

POSTSCRIPT.

READER, I thought good to advertiſe thee, that I have delivered this to thy Hand, in the ſame Order and Method in which it was preached, and almoſt in the ſame Words, without any diminiſhings, or conſiderable Enlargings, unleſs it be in the fourteen laſt Particulars; upon ſome of which I have made ſome Enlargements, which I could not then do for want of time: but the Subſtance of every one of them was then laid down in the ſame particular Order as here thou haſt them. And now I have done, I doubt not (to uſe the Words of a moderate Man on the like occaſion) it will fare with me, as it doth commonly with him that parts a Fray; both Parties may perhaps drive at me for wiſhing them no worſe than Peace: My Ambition of the publick Tranquility of the Church of God, I hope will carry me thrô theſe hazards; let both beat me, ſo their Quarrels ceaſe, I ſhall rejoice in the Blows and Scars I ſhall take for the Church's Safety.

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